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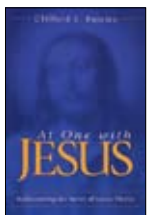
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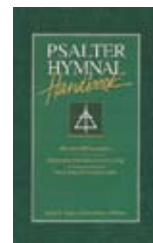
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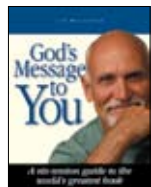
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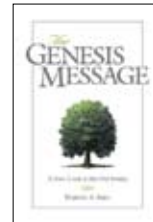
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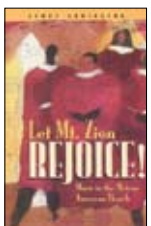
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Language Matters

IT'S A FINE CHALLENGE TO BE A BI-NATIONAL DENOMINATION. We get stretched in healthy ways trying to understand, respect, and support each other in our different ministry contexts. Some fallout from the recent Olympics shows that we need to be sensitive to those differing contexts in what we say as well as in what we do.

Take politics. In the United States the government boldly proposes plans for universal health care, paying down staggering debt, and ending the war. These challenges weigh heavily on the minds of our U.S. sisters and brothers.

So what can the Canadian government muster? Its only notable proposal in the recent throne speech was a slight editing of the Canadian national anthem. The frequent use of “O Canada” during the Olympic Games brought denizens of the frozen North to sudden awareness that we have a national anthem and that it contains politically incorrect language.

Unlike the U.S. national anthem that's still good to go, “O Canada” offends in three instances:

- “O Canada! Our home and *native* land!” makes liars of immigrants when they sing it. (And many of us *are* immigrants.)
- “True patriot love in all thy *sons* command” leaves out more than 50 percent of the population, the “daughters.”
- “*God*, keep our land glorious and free!” discriminates against atheists and agnostics.

Popular response to this benign government proposal was as fierce as any Midwest Republican's to Obama's health-care package. Messing with “O Canada” met with a thundering NO. The Harper government backpedaled faster than you can say “Canada” backward.

It appears that Canucks are as patriotic as their neighbo(u)r(s) to the south. But political correctness doesn't seem as high on the agenda and offense isn't taken as quickly. For example, my spouse isn't particularly distressed by “sons.” I'm a first generation immigrant but gladly sing “our . . . native land” And your average Canadian agnostic doesn't much mind placing a call to Someone who may not be in.

Should Christ-followers be politically correct in how we speak?

Of course it is. But Canadians for whatever reason don't care to measure every word—certainly not in historical works like “O Canada.”

So should we as Christ-followers both north and south of the 49th parallel be politically correct in how we speak?

I believe we should be politically *sensitive*, monitoring and measuring carefully the context in which we speak. What is pleasing speech in one instance can be horribly hurtful in another. Let's follow Paul's admonition in Romans 14-15, neither to judge nor to offend each other or anybody else. Our speech must reflect our true citizenship in God's kingdom. Good diplomats train and discipline themselves to say the right thing in the right way in the right place.

As representatives of King Jesus in Canada, the U.S., and worldwide, we need to do that too. What we say and how we say it really matters (James 3).

We're hardly called to pharisaical, picky political rectitude. But we are called to *always* speak the truth in love (Eph. 3:15-16) and act on it.

In our bi-national context, let's watch our language, eh? ■



Rev. Bob De Moor is editor of *The Banner* and pastor of preaching and administration for West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta.

Why? Because Canadians tend to believe, perhaps naively, that their society at least *tries* to do a good job of not discriminating. And actions are seen to speak louder than words.

Isn't Canada guilty of injustice?

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Clinging to the Covenant

I've thought a lot about God's covenant promises since becoming a grandmother six years ago. I'm thankful for the faith legacy passed down to me from my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and as far back as we can trace. God has proved faithful from generation to generation.

But I have one nagging worry: will I be the weakest link? My faith has been flaky at times in my life, and my children have witnessed my inconsistencies and failures. Have I properly equipped them for their torch-bearing task?

By the time my grandson was born, my walk with God had steadied and even soared, thanks to God's incredible grace and perseverance. Out of gratitude for my restoration, I felt passionate about pouring into my grandson all that I have learned about our loving and compassionate Savior.

The biggest challenge in this mission was and is the 2,300 miles that separate us. How could I carry out my covenant responsibilities from such a distance? Not only that, how could I be the coolest grandma ever when I see him so seldom?

On the day my grandson Tre was born, I flew cross-country from California to Michigan and was able to hold him in my arms within an hour of his birth. I spent his first 10 days in my daughter's home, helping her care for him but also stealing every second possible to bond with him myself.

Before catching my flight home, I laid Tre in my lap and earnestly prayed the Aaronic blessing over him, with my tears streaming down onto his little body: "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his face toward you and give you his peace."

A few months later Tre's parents brought him to church for baptism, which was administered by my father, Tre's great-grandfather. I felt assured again of God's covenant blessings on Tre, that the waters of baptism would follow him all the days of his life.

I have since found excuses to visit Tre three to four times each year, and our times together are special. We play, laugh, read, pray, bake, watch his favorite movies, sleep in tents way too small for me, eat lots of sugary treats, and we talk about God.

To my delight, Tre thinks deeply about the Creator and loves to ask theological questions: Why can't we see God? Why is God in three persons and not 100?

On one of these visits, I was explaining to 5-year-old Tre how we become Christians—that it starts with God loving us and us loving him back, and at some point we ask Jesus to come into our hearts and he promises to never leave. Later that day, when I asked Tre to tell his mommy how a person becomes a Christian, he repeated my explanation and then said, "I want to do that."

Right there in the back seat of the car, Tre pulled up his knees, bowed his head, folded his hands, and said, "Dear God, please come into my heart. Amen." Then he looked up and with amazement declared, "He was already there!"

With tear-filled eyes and abundant prayers of thanksgiving, I realized what God was trying to teach me: God is the Covenant Keeper. It's not about me—God was already there! God has promised to be a God to us, to our descendants, and to the generations after us.

I'm clinging to that promise and breathing a big sigh of relief. ■



Rev. Bonny Mulder-Behnia is family ministries pastor for Rosewood Christian Reformed Church in Bellflower, Calif.



The challenge is not getting God into our lives but realizing **that our lives are already in God.**

— ROBERT MORRIS

Settling for Religion?

OPINION

Religion has been distorted by sin.

PHOTO BY BILL ASBESTOS

IN HIS BANNER ARTICLE “Got Religion?” (January 2010), Rev. Randy Blacketer raises some good points about the word *religion*, but I don’t think he takes seriously the reason *why* it has become a bad word in the first place.

While he’s right that religion in and of itself is a good creational thing, we also need to recognize that religion has been distorted by sin and, as a result, it can easily become a harmful thing. When people speak against religion today, they are not speaking against the heart’s innate need for the Ultimate, but rather against religion gone wrong. In a word, they’re speaking against *religiosity*.

Whether churchgoers or not, people are tired of a “gospel” that is no gospel at all, of a “church” that is no church at all, and of churchgoers who are not disciples of Jesus at all.

The problem is that sin not only distorts the seed of religion, it also distorts our reception and appropriation of the gospel. We sinfully exchange the gospel of Jesus Christ for a religion of our own making. Rather than being the hope-filled message of new life in Jesus Christ, the gospel becomes a set of do’s and don’ts—

a list of doctrinal *shibboleths* and an attitude of moral superiority that makes us respond to sinners as the Pharisees did rather than as Jesus did.

Religion in this sense is not the human heart’s desire for something Ultimate; rather, it’s a shallow copycat of the gospel we profess to believe. In this religion we trust that our good performance of church attendance, tithing, and moral spotlessness will help God to love us. And we bristle when someone breaks that illusion.

But when the truth of the gospel reaches down into our hearts—where the seed of religion is planted—it transforms us. We begin to know with utter seriousness that “I am more wretchedly sinful than I understand,” while simultaneously being joyfully assured that “In Christ God loves me more than I can possibly imagine!”

It’s one thing to believe the gospel on a surface level, where it leads only to “churchianity” and religiosity—the “religion” that our society rightfully detests. It’s another thing entirely to drop our pretence of good performance and allow the gospel to permeate our hearts and transform our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Are you settling for religion? ■



Rev. Trevor Payton is pastor of Hagersville (Ont.) Community Christian Reformed Church.



Climate Controversy

The April *Banner* reported the signing of a climate change declaration written by evangelical leaders from around the world (“CRC Signs Climate Change Declaration”). While we can probably all agree that we have failed to be good stewards of God’s creation, we do not all agree that climate change is manmade or that human beings can control the Earth’s temperature—which has been fluctuating for centuries, long before the industrial revolution.

The science of climate change is debatable and has turned scandalous. By signing a controversial declaration that declares humans have caused the earth’s climate and temperature to change, the CRC’s Board of Trustees is stepping over the threshold from acknowledging humanity’s sin to agreeing with a flawed and questionable argument.

—Terry Tinklenberg
Edgerton, Minn.

Playing with Numbers

I found Rev. Bob De Moor’s editorial to be a good reminder of both death and eternal life (“Numerical Nonsense?” April 2010). His points were easy to remember because of the clever number play. At the same time, I also think that linking numbers with spiritual truths can quickly become dangerous or at least misleading.

TTERS

You can use numbers like this to drive home practically any point you like. It's a fun way to look at theology, but not a very meaningful one.

—Erica Jensen
Calvin College student
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Unorthodox Cremation

I just read the article on cremation, and I think it was very thorough and well written (April 2010). However, I do need to point out one matter. I was raised in the CRC but have been Eastern Orthodox since 1991. The article's sentence "There does not appear to be a formal rule against cremation in the Orthodox tradition" is not correct. To hold a funeral service in an Orthodox Church, the body of the deceased person must be physically present in order for the priest to pronounce the final Absolution. Without the body, the Orthodox Church will not even consider holding a funeral in the church. The Orthodox Church in Japan is an exception because cremation is the law of the land.

—Willem Tensen
Burbank, Calif.

Treasuring the Heidelberg

Thank you for including "Our Great Treasures" in the March issue. How sad to hear a young person have to ask, "Why don't we learn more about the Heidelberg Catechism?" What better time-tested document by which to teach our young members (and older ones) our identity? Discussion and small groups in many churches have taken the place of the evening services of solid teaching as they were meant to be.

—Marion Van Wyk
Clinton, Ontario

Problematic Pastor?

I appreciated George Vander Weit's answer to the question about declining church attendance and a pastor's alleged lack of

concern (FAQs, March 2010). The question ended with, "Shouldn't he be asked to leave?"

I agree with the wise advice that the pastor be given tools and resources for improvement prior to involving classis and the denomination. We have often found underlying issues contributing to a pastor's apparent lack of concern. Sometimes when a leader is given the opportunity to face these deeper issues, performance in other areas improves.

I wonder if this church's elders have addressed these concerns with their pastor. Has there been a study to determine the reasons attendance is declining? Has the pastor been given a sabbatical during his 10-year tenure? Answers to such questions would shed a lot of light on what would help the pastor and the church move ahead together.

—Jim Schlottman
CEO/Executive Director
QuietWaters Ministries
Denver, Colo.

Family Visiting

If Church Order Article 65, requiring annual "family visiting" of church members by church pastors or elders, is "unrealistic," as Pastor George Vander Weit has discerned (FAQs, February 2010), what are our options? Do we change the Church Order, ignore it, or apply our own "realistic" standard? Are there clues in the Church Order that would help the rest of us discern "this is one that we really mean" or "this one is unrealistic—apply as you wish"?

—Les Kuiper
Oostburg, Wis.

Bombs and Burqas

I think that writer Jim Romahn glosses too easily over the problem we face in the form of jihadists who have declared war on the infidels ("Beyond Bombs and Burqas," February 2010). Further, he

reports that Ayaan Hirsi Ali had been deported by the Dutch government because she changed her name on her refugee application. The fact is that she had informed the authorities of this before she became a Member of Parliament; she even discussed this with the Minister of Immigration, Rita Verdonk. When a reporter again raised this issue during a televised interview, Verdonk threatened to cancel Ali's citizenship, but then had to withdraw her threat after the public and her government colleagues raised strong objections. During these tumultuous events, Ali remained deeply grateful for having found freedom in Holland. She wrote, "I am lucky and privileged to be Dutch" (*Infidel*, p. 346).

—Harry Antonides
Willowdale, Ontario

I was disappointed in the misleading character assassination of Ms. Ali contained in this article. Her reason for using her grandfather's family name is clearly stated on pages 192-193 of her book *Infidel*.

I was also disappointed in the article's conclusion: "The challenge for us is to learn to love all God's people with the same love our God has for all people." It would seem this statement is not in agreement with the Reformed doctrines of "Irresistible Grace" or "Limited Atonement."

—Julian Ross Hudson
Ponoka, Alberta

Apology

The Banner apologizes to readers and to Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the CRC, for the illustration accompanying his Dear Reader column titled "What Do You Want to Be?" (April 2010).

One of the goals of this magazine is to reflect and celebrate the diversity of Christ's church. Unfortunately, this illustration did just the opposite.

NEWS

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Board Responds to Synod's Request Concerning CRC Structure Changes

When the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees made changes to the denomination's administrative structure early last year, Synod 2009 approved the changes.

However, delegates to synod (the church's annual leadership meeting) also instructed the board to develop guidelines on how it would involve the broader church, especially synod, when considering future significant structural

changes (see "Executive Director Explains Structure Changes," July 2009).

At its February meeting, the board adopted its response to synod. It asks that Synod 2010 affirm that "significant structural change" refers to alterations in the mandate of the board or those of CRC agencies or ministries.

Rev. Ken Boonstra, who chaired the committee that wrote the response, said, "What quickly unfolded for [the committee] was trying to clarify the meaning of

'significant structural change.' Synod thought what [the board] did was significant structural change, and we didn't think it was." He acknowledged that the committee defined it fairly narrowly.

Board of Trustees member Rev. Paul Vanderkooy questioned whether the report answers what synod asked. "We're saying we don't feel those structural changes happened, so we're trying to tell [synod] what structural change is," he said. "My sense was [that synod] was much more concerned about lines of reporting. Now we're saying, 'We don't agree so we're going to tell you what we think.'"

Boonstra agreed it's a dilemma. "It was the opinion of our committee that what [synod] saw as significant structural change, we didn't see as [that]. So this is how we understand what it is."

BOT member John Rop said he, too, wrestled with the connection between synod's request and the board's response. "I don't think there is a right answer," he said. "The underlying issue is an atmosphere of distrust on the part of synod to the [board]."

CRC Executive Director Rev. Jerry Dykstra said there ought not to be tension between the board and synod. "The board is made up of 30 people elected by synod itself," he said. "It is the board of synod."

In the end the board accepted the report and will send it to Synod 2010 as its response to the request of Synod 2009.

—Gayla R. Postma

Ontario Student Named Volleyball Player of the Year

Redeemer University College student Ryan Talsma was recently named Men's Volleyball Player of the Year for the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association (OCAA).

Coach Wayne Harris described Talsma as a consummate team player. "Ryan Talsma is a humble leader that never gets bigger than the game. His leadership, natural gifts, and his work ethic have made him one of the most feared players in the OCAA and across the country," said Harris.

Talsma, a member of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Bowmanville, Ontario, credited his team for the award. "We all make each other better, and this award is certainly a result of that," he said.

—Sophie Vandenberg



OCAA Volleyball player of the year
Ryan Talsma

Stuart Dykstra measures the water quality of a spring in Haiti's earthquake area.



Creating Clean Water for Haiti

Clean water is a critical need in Haiti—and Stuart Dykstra is committed to helping the Haitian people find it.

Dykstra, a hydrogeologist and member of Milwood Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Mich., has made multiple trips to the world's most water-poor nation, successfully finding groundwater and effectively delivering it.

The work is rewarding, he said, because it challenges him to understand the complexity of this world as well as God's plans for places like Haiti.

Dykstra is vice president of environment, water, and natural resources for V3 Companies Ltd., a Chicago-based engineering firm that

has worked on development of groundwater resources in Haiti for the past four years.

After the January earthquake, Dykstra and a colleague spent nearly a month there doing water supply assessment and repair work in

Port au Prince and villages to the west. They returned to Haiti in March to do more.

"Our Haiti experience and our professional skills give us a particular ability to help people in practical ways," Dykstra said. "For many of us at V3, Haiti has become a place of special concern, and it is a privilege to be able to provide help."

Dykstra expects to continue working there for many more years.

"Haiti is a passion of mine, both personally and professionally," he said. "I don't absolutely know God's will for my life, but I do know that Haiti is a place where I am able to help others. It feels right to do this work."

—Henry Huisjen

Firefighting Pastor Makes Connections in Iowa

Rev. Joel De Boer said being sensitive to people is required whether he is pastoring or putting out a fire.

De Boer is pastor of both Britt and Woden Christian Reformed churches in Iowa, and is also a volunteer firefighter with the Britt Fire Department.

"One of the challenges in a pastoral role is that I'm Christ's ambassador, whether in the pulpit or going into a house to fight a fire," De Boer said. "I always need to be sensitive to the people I'm dealing with. Whatever the task, the people are sacred. There's always joy and a sense of accomplishment when you have a sense of community and connection. I see that in both worlds."

De Boer joined the fire department five years ago. Some firefighters were initially skeptical about accepting a pastor.

"After the first year, we blended well together," he said.



Rev. Joel De Boer is also a firefighter with the Britt, Iowa, fire department.

Six members of the fire department have joined the Britt congregation and another regularly attends. Four or five families are in the congregation as a result of De Boers' firefighting connections.

Along with fighting fires, De Boer writes grants, leads com-

munity education, and serves as counselor and chaplain. He also leads devotions at various fire-house functions.

"It has been a blessing in ways unimaginable," he said. "There are lots of moments that God makes holy that don't look spiritual in nature."

—Paul Delger

Calvin Seminary President Nominee

After its meeting April 23, the board of trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary hopes to announce its nominee for the next president of the school. The nominee will be interviewed by the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church the following week.

The Banner will publish the name of and information about the candidate on its website by May 3. See www.thebanner.org. Watch for a full article about the nominee in our June edition.

The nominee will be interviewed in June by delegates to Synod 2010 (the CRC's annual leadership meeting) and, if approved, will succeed Rev. Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

—Gayla R. Postma

NEWS

Highlights from Classis Meetings

Two or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to meetings of classis, a regional grouping of churches. Delegates to classis review and make decisions about their shared ministries and practice mutual accountability for their

congregations' individual ministries. Here are highlights from the most recent classis meetings:

Several people were **welcomed into ministry** in the Christian Reformed Church, including seminary graduates Bryan Dick, Darrin Compagner, David Spoelma, Dirk VanEyck,

Jon Flikkema, William Harris, Jonathan Spronk, Kevin Vande Streek, Laurie Hogge, Matthew Stob, Nathaniel Bradford, Robert Datema, and Simon Cunningham.

Transferred in from other denominations were Revs. Cary Holbert, Felix Fernandez, John Westfall, Jung-Un Park, Peter Kang, Christina Kang, Taek Ho Yang, and Sung Soo Joshua Lim.

Rev. Charles Jeon and Rev. Dan Kruis were **re-admitted** to CRC ministry.

Revs. Charles Hong, Mark Klompien, and Steven Steenstra were **loaned** to non-CRC churches.

Revs. DaeWoo Park, Dan Vos, Douglas Pruim, Gary Stevens, Jae Kim, and Michael Veenema were **released from their congregations**.

Derek Miedema, Douglas VandeKamp, Mark Tidd, and Henry Mogollon were **released from CRC ministry**.

Ted Gray was **dismissed** and Daniel L. Mulder was **deposed**.

New ministries were started in Santa Monica, Calif.; Olympia/Tacoma, Wash.; the Capitol Hill area of Seattle, Wash.; Mount Airy, Pa.; and Iowa City, Iowa.

New campus ministries are being planned for the University of British Columbia, Loyola University in Chicago, and a multi-school ministry in Ottawa, Ontario.

Comunidad de Cristo in Hialeah, Fla., **closed**, and First CRC of Oak Lawn, Ill., **withdrew from the denomination**.

Classis Grandville referred to its executive committee a request from First CRC, Byron Center,

Mich., to **exclude women as delegates**.

Classis Minnkota is requesting that Synod 2010 **note errors** in the biblical-theological argument that presents evidence in favor of the **ordination of women**.

Three classes requested that Synod 2010 approve the **transfer** of two Michigan congregations to a geographically distant classis (Minnkota) due to **theological differences concerning the ordination of women**.

Several classes noted **financial struggles** of churches and serious **shortfalls in ministry share giving**.

Four classes dealt with forming **Safe Church Teams**.

Ten classes discussed the **Belhar Confession**.

Four classes discussed materials from the denomination's **Faith Formation Committee** regarding **children at the Lord's Supper**.

Four classes discussed the **Covenant for Officebearers**, a proposed revision of the **Form of Subscription** that deacons, elders, and pastors sign declaring they agree with the CRC's doctrines.

Classis Rocky Mountain requested that Synod 2010 remove the 1991 declaration that rules out **theorizing about evolutionary forebears of the human race**, clarifying the confusing language of Synod 1991 and allowing theologians and scientists to further investigate the matter.

—Banner news correspondents

Charlottetown GEMS Grows into Two Groups

On Saturday mornings in downtown Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, you'll find a small group of girls and women gathered for breakfast, practical life lessons, and encouragement.

This is the "Saturday Morning Community Club," a daughter group of the weeknight GEMS group, the girls' club group offered in most Christian Reformed churches.



Some of the girls of the Saturday Morning Community Club at Charlottetown CRC.

GEMS counselors at Charlottetown CRC felt God was calling them to reach out to girls who weren't able to attend the regularly scheduled meetings. Linda Van Kampen, the club's coordinator, has also visited the GEMS project in Zambia. She said, "If they can [reach out to girls] in Africa with so little, certainly we can do it here!"

Up to 12 girls have come to the Saturday meetings, even during the summer. They eat, sing, participate in creative movement, learn practical skills such as braiding hair and gardening, and learn about God.

Above all, they are given love and acceptance. Most girls are from low-income families and are being raised by grandmothers or "aunts." The girls recently said that they wanted to learn how to pray, and the counselors were moved when the girls began to pray for the leaders!

In Charlottetown, God is using the willing hearts of a number of women to fulfill the vision of GEMS: Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior.

—Brenda Visser

Denver Teacher Reunited with Thai Orphan

Kay Bierling, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Denver, Colo., was recently reminded what a small world we live in. She was surprised to discover that a student in a high school class she teaches was someone she and her husband Al had met in 2008 when visiting Mae La, a refugee camp on the border of Thailand and Burma.

Al and Kay, missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions for 28 years, made the trip to the



Mae La camp to teach math and literacy workshops.

In Denver, Kay teaches English Language Acquisition at South High School. Last fall, she was teaching the story of the blind man and the elephant. In order to connect to her students, she promised to show them a photo of her and Al riding an elephant in Thailand.

While searching through her photos, Kay recognized one of her current students, MuYo, in a group photo taken at the camp. When shown the photo, MuYo immediately recognized herself among her many friends. Her face lit up and a connection was made.

—Sarah Boonstra

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Willard H. De Vries
1933-2010

Rev. Willard De Vries, known for his steadfast diligence in ministry and gentle humor, died on January 3.

De Vries graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1958 and was ordained into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

He served congregations in Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan, South Dakota, and Arizona, retiring in 1998.

De Vries is remembered for devout diligence in preaching, teaching, and pastoral visiting. He always preached from memory. He remained fluent in the Dutch and Frisian languages throughout his ministry. He also authored several Bible study outlines.

De Vries participated in several synods (the CRC's annual leadership meeting), served on denominational boards, and was president of the board of Dordt College for six years.

He is survived by his wife, Alice; two children and their spouses; and three grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. De Vries, please visit www.thebanner.org. In addition to being posted online, further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook.

Western Christian in Hull, Iowa, wins state championship.



Iowa Boys Win State Basketball Title

The boy's basketball team of Western Christian High in Hull, Iowa, won its sixth state title in February. It was its third title in four years. "I want to thank God for giving me the opportunity to coach these young men," said coach Jim Eekoff. "The thing I'll most remember is Tyler (Wolterstorff) and all the pain he endured." Wolterstorff scored 19 points despite a stress fracture in his lower back.

—Sherry Kooiker

Michigan Congressman Retires

Vern Ehlers, a 16-year member of the United States House of Representatives and a former physics professor at Calvin College, announced he will retire when his term ends this year.

Ehlers, a member of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., represents the same area of Michigan once represented by former U.S. president Gerald Ford. His seat was previously held by former Calvin College professor Paul B. Henry.

Before serving in Congress, Ehlers served 11 years in Michigan's state legislature. Ehlers was the first physicist in Congress, and has taken an active role in many science-related legislative issues, including the Great Lakes Legacy Act, which has led to major environmental cleanup efforts around the Great Lakes.

In a statement announcing his retirement, Ehlers said, "While I regret leaving when so much more needs to be done, I know it is time for me to step down."

—Christian Bell

Michigan Church Celebrates 125th Anniversary

South Olive (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church is spending 2010 celebrating its 125th anniversary.

Mike VanderZwaag, co-director for the anniversary celebrations, said the theme "Remember Our Heritage, Rejoice in God's Grace, Rededicate Lives of Grace" was birthed from the denomination's theme for its 150th anniversary.

The kick-off included an address by Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and music that included both hymns and praise songs led by the youth band.

Future plans for the church's celebration include former pastors preaching throughout the year, a Heritage Sunday with an all-church photo and picnic on May 23, followed by an afternoon Dutch service reminiscent of years past, as well as an old-fashioned church picnic on August 21.

—Karen Gorter

Driving Farther on Deep Frying

Teacher Barry Latham gets 40-45 miles per gallon with biodiesel fuel that he and his chemistry students make from used cooking oil.

Latham, a member of Hope Christian Reformed Church in Oak Forest, Ill., teaches at a local public school. Each year he and his students convert 500-700 gallons (1,900-2,600 liters) of vegetable oil from the school cafeteria into biodiesel fuel.

Alcohol and lye are mixed into filtered cooking oil to make the fuel. The process takes about two days and costs 50-60 cents per gallon. And for every 30 gallons of oil that they convert to fuel, five gallons of glycerine (soap) are produced. Latham said, "This is a zero-waste product. Nothing goes



RUTH MOBILARD DEYOUNG

down the drain, into a landfill, or into the air." Latham and his students sell the soap at the many alternative energy fairs that they attend to display their biodiesel fuel project. They now plan to market the soap to their school, which will save the school money.

Latham uses the fuel in his own car, and it's also used in one school district minibus as well as in a half-dozen trucks and tractors. In cold weather, the biodiesel fuel must be mixed with regular gasoline.

Latham is passionate about sharing the environmental benefits of recycling cooking oil and other green projects that he has

Barry Latham (center) explains to chemistry students Maria Avalos (left) and Lilly Ortiz how recycled cooking oil becomes biodiesel fuel and glycerine in their school greenhouse lab.

helped to initiate at his school. His car advertises his website (blatham.multiply.com) and the fact that it is powered by biodiesel fuel. He has shared his knowledge of the process, gained by experimentation and research, with other teachers, and has prepared a packet of materials to help them launch similar programs with the help of energy grants.

—Ruth Mobilard DeYoung

Indiana Church Gives Surprise Warmth for Soldiers



CRC member Brad Van Kuiken's unit serving in Afghanistan received much-needed warm undershirts from Crown Point CRC.

112 shirts at a discount, plus 480 hand and foot warmers. The church's donation covered the \$200 shipping cost as well.

Each box sent included a note that said, "Know that there are many people from this church praying for your safety."

Brad said when the boxes arrived, the soldiers were ecstatic.

—Ruth Mobilard DeYoung

New Jersey Churches Helping the Homeless

For 20 years, six Christian Reformed churches have joined other churches in northern New Jersey to help the Good Shepherd Mission in Paterson minister to men struggling with addiction or other issues.

From Thanksgiving to Easter, every night of the week the mission provides a gospel message, training, meals, and a bed for those who are homeless. The churches each assist by providing transportation for 10 men. According to Steven Bruining, coordinator of the program, the men are fed a “good Dutch dinner.” After



SUSAN BOONSTRA

Unity CRC in Prospect Park, N.J., sponsors a dinner for men in need who will be sleeping at their church that evening.

dinner there is a Bible lesson, games, and fellowship.

The men sleep in the church building along with three members of the church. In the morning they receive a hearty breakfast and a box lunch before returning to the mission.

Deacons of the churches raise the money to run the program and recruit the many volunteers needed from each church. They obtain beds, cots, and bedding from hotels and the National Guard in the area. Each church also publishes the first names of the men along with their prayer needs.

Rev. Mike Vieira, the director of Good Shepherd mission, is thankful for the contributions of these churches because they allow the mission to minister to more men in the greater Paterson area.

The six Christian Reformed churches involved are Faith Community and Cedar Hill CRCs in Wyckoff, Unity CRC in Prospect Park, Midland Park CRC, Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, and Covenant CRC in North Haledon.

—Calvin Hulstein

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Eugene Bradford
1915-2010

Rev. Eugene Bradford, 94, champion of justice, theologian, and gifted administrator, passed away from old age on January 20.

Bradford served in both the Presbyterian Church and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church denominations before he was ordained into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1951.

He served CRC congregations in Michigan, New Jersey, and Illinois. During his time in Illinois, he was drawn into painful racial struggles involving local Christian schools, and subsequently devoted much energy to anti-discrimination policies that were adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1968.

Bradford spent two years as an administrator at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He also served as president of several CRC denominational boards.

Known for his seemingly boundless energy, Bradford retired in 1980 and subsequently served 19 more congregations when they were without pastors.

Bradford's wife Gwen preceded him in death in 1988. He is survived by his wife Florence, five children and their spouses, 10 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Ontario Quilters Stitching in Love

Quilters from ClearView Christian Reformed Church in Oakville, Ontario, are spreading love in their community one stitch at a time.

What started out as a project to sew quilts for 75 AIDS orphans in Kenya has become a source of encouragement and support

closer to home.

“It has become like a small group [where we pray] for one another and [learn] from God’s Word,” said Margaret Bootsma.

Annie Bergshoeff observed, “We are the arms and heart of Jesus to all who attend or even just drop by.”

The group held a twelve-hour quilt-a-thon and raised \$10,000 to provide footwear, Bibles, and more in Kenya.

The group has tripled in size in the past year to fifteen quilters ages 11 to 81, and includes women of other

denominations and faiths from the surrounding community. To participate, women need only to be able to sew a straight line. “[The quilts] are not perfect,” Bootsma said, “but neither are we. But somehow they are all beautiful.”

—Sophie Vandenberg



(From left): ClearView CRC quilters Jane Burke, Annie Bergshoeff, Miep Jager, Pam VanWeelden and Margaret Bootsma in the airport showing the quilts they delivered to Kenya.

HARRY BERGSHOEFF



Ministering Through Hip-Hop

John Calvin might have liked Christian hip-hop music, according to Jesus Bayona. “Christian hip-hop is, for the most part, Reformed,” said Bayona, who pastors a brand-new emerging Christian Reformed church in Port St. Lucie, Fla. “The music is very theological.”

Bayona’s congregation, Word of the Cross, runs a hip-hop ministry called Luminosity. The group regularly performs at high schools, colleges, churches, and parks in Florida.

Most of the church’s members grew up in the hip-hop subculture. “We were defined by hip-hop. It was our god,” said Tony Baptiste, who sings in Luminosity. Then Baptiste and his friends found Jesus. “Things about [hip-hop] culture were redeemable. We decided we’re going to do what we did for our glory to the glory of our God [instead.]”

Bayona was the first of his friends to become a Christian. He led friends from his youth into a growing Christian group that became like a family. He is currently preparing to be ordained in the CRC.

The Christian hip-hop and R&B group Luminosity is a ministry of Word of the Cross, an emerging Christian Reformed church in Port St. Lucie, Fla. The group is working on its first album.

“People have always looked to me for spiritual encouragement,” Bayona said. “I’ve always been thrust into leadership positions without even asking for it.”

—Roxanne Van Farowe

Worship in Basic English Draws Immigrants and Refugees

Although they come from different countries all over the world, participants in the Basic English Service at Church of the Servant Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., have found a common language in faith that enables them to worship together.

Immigrants and refugees join together at the church every Sunday for a service conducted in simplified language and incorporating visual elements that aid in comprehension.

Held concurrently with the church’s regular Sunday morning worship, about 40 people participate in the service. Once a month, the two services are combined, and both groups worship and celebrate communion together.

“It’s truly a global feast when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper,”

said Helen Bonzelaar, who chairs the committee that started the program.

For decades, the church has held English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and been involved with Grand Rapids-area agencies in bringing refugees to



Sobha Cchetri was among the Bhutanese/Nepalese refugees recently baptized by Rev. Jack Roeda during a worship service at Church of the Servant.

STEVE HUISER/HONG

the United States. But refugees who came to the church had trouble following along in English, so the idea for the Basic English Service was born.

Not all participants have Christian backgrounds, but many have chosen to be baptized since they began attending the services.

Members of Church of the Servant lead and participate in the service and help participants with transportation.

“We gather and hold hands and sing a doxology together,” said Bonzelaar. “We worship God with a bit more awe. If people from around the globe can work together with us, our worship is so much richer.”

—Christian Bell



Rev. Mark Minegar

CRC Pastor Named City Chaplain

Rev. Mark Minegar, associate pastor of Hillcrest Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich., has been named that city’s chaplain. In a volunteer capacity, he provides counsel or comfort to city employees and citizens who request it.

Minegar previously served as city chaplain of Plainwell, Mich., while he was pastor at Calvary Community CRC.

He is responsible to hear concerns of fire personnel, other city employees, and citizens. He also performs weddings and funerals.

Rev. Minegar said his role provides services for those who don’t have a church or pastor. “This position will open the door a little wider to do that kind of ‘Good Samaritan’ work and have the support of City Hall,” he said.

—Carolyn Yost



Derk Maat

Turning Waste into Energy

One way that environmental engineer Derk Maat lives out his Christian calling is by turning waste into energy.

Decades ago, as a budding engineer in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Maat was dismayed to discover that the river he loved to fish in was contaminated. "I was taking soundings at the river's mouth, which was being filled with waste from a paper mill. The water was so bad my hands would come out with a rash. Meanwhile, two miles upstream I could fish in pristine water," he said.

Maat decided to help find solutions to the problem. Today he owns a company that uses a clean "waste-to-energy" gasification process to convert energy locked in organic waste into electricity—while at the same time minimizing harmful emissions. Many of his clients in the pulp and paper industry now use their sludge and wood waste as an energy source.

"God sent his Son to save the world, not just souls. The world includes creation too. It's been redeemed and needs to be reclaimed," Maat explains. While converting waste into energy makes good business sense, Maat, a member of Meadowvale Community Christian Reformed Church, in Mississauga, Ontario, sees it as a matter of faithful discipleship. "The presence of the kingdom doesn't only affect our personal spiritual lives. We have to take our faith into our boardrooms and projects. The love of God for his creation needs to permeate each one of us, our companies, [and] our marketplace," he said.

—Sophie Vandenberg

See news about Synod 2010 on pp. 40-41.

No Room in the (Ontario) Inn

When heavy snow closed a major Ontario highway in January, motorists were diverted into Strathroy, Ontario, where local inns quickly filled up. The overflow crowd—48 people, two dogs, and one bunny—were accommodated at East Strathroy Christian Reformed Church.

Rev. Andrew de Gelder received a call from the local Salvation Army. "The [provincial police] were looking for a facility to serve as an emergency shelter for dozens of travelers who were stranded," he said.

Church members brought pillows and blankets. Coffee and food were served in the gym and weary travelers, many of whom had slid off the road in their cars or been in accidents, were able to join in the unplanned sleepover in church classrooms and nursery rooms.

By 10:00 the next morning, the motorists were on their way. "We have gotten some



ANDREW DE GELDER

Dozens of motorists stranded by a snowstorm bunked down at East Strathroy (Ont.) CRC in early January.

thank-you cards and e-mails," said church administrator Wilma Zondag. "They all were very appreciative."

"It was a night to remember and a wonderful opportunity to help strangers in Christ's name," said de Gelder.

—Raquel Flores Lunshof

Dinner Is Served at West Michigan Church

Every Wednesday night, dinner is served for 200 people at Calvary Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Mich. Many of the diners come from apartments near the church.

"The dinners are definitely to help those needing assistance," said church administrator Laurie Gummere. Attendees say eating meals at a loving, caring place makes them feel like a family, and many say the dinners are often their best meal of the week.

Roger Levering, who started the ministry, said he did it out of compassion. "God has used the dinners to reach out in love to people and help them with



CAROLYN KOSTER YOST

Bill Vryhof, right, hands out free dinner tickets to guests.

other needs. To the people of the community, the Wednesday night dinners are their church." The dinners are coordinated by Ron Grooters.

The church also provides items such as gloves, scarves,

and health and beauty aids after the meal, and in the summer there is a community garden on the church grounds.

The cost of the meals is covered by the church's budget.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

Young and Undocumented

A CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE OF MOVING TO THE UNITED STATES FROM MEXICO

JUAN*, NOW 27, moved with his family to the United States from Mexico more than 13 years ago. After attending high school and community college in northwest Iowa, he now works at a local store and is deeply involved in his church. As a Christian, Juan believes God is working all the parts of his life together, including his undocumented status. Dordt College student Adrianna Oudman recently sat down with him for a conversation about his experience.

**Name has been changed.*

When did your family move to the United States?

December 1996.

Was anyone from your family here earlier?

Yeah. My dad came first, and he stayed with my uncle. He worked for a year or so and then went back. He worked in Mexico, but it didn't work out. He came again, and then he brought the whole family.

Why did you decide to move?

Well, life was a lot tougher back then. You think the economy is bad here? You don't know nothing. The economy's worse there. It's hard to find a job, too. There might be work here and there, but it doesn't pay as good and you work long hours.

I was 14, my brother was 16, and my sister was 12, so we didn't have a say. We

came here because of my parents' choice.

My dad and mom didn't like our city in Mexico for us growing up. There were a lot of drugs, gangs, violence. Some people got stabbed in the street. There's a lot of superstition and witchcraft there too. . . . It's a funky little place. One of my friends from next door carried a gun in his backpack.

The area here—it's a nice area to grow up. Immigrants might have something good in their country, like family, but they're looking out for their kids, so they move.

What was it like to come to the States?

I think there was just one Hispanic family in our high school besides mine. It was difficult to learn English, but it was easier compared to some people today. I had

no translators, and the other Hispanic students in high school wouldn't talk to me in Spanish. We pretty much had to speak English right away. We had to figure it out on our own, so we picked up more that way, I think.

Now a lot of people don't even have to speak English, I guess. Some of them don't even make an effort. They come here to work for a year or so, save up, then go back to pay off their house or start a business.

What was the hardest part of moving to the States?

I missed my church. I really liked my pastor [in Mexico]. We were really good friends, and I was just starting to take pastor classes because I was friends with my pastor and the music leader. My family has gone to church all the time, but that's when I decided on my own, "God is good. I like this." That's when I made my profession of faith. Then we had to go, and I was sad.

Do the immigrants you know go back to their countries, or do they stay here?

I've never been back to Mexico in all this time. I think for Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Hondurans it's harder, especially for those who cross the desert or more than one border. When they finally reach the promised land, they're like, "Heck, all I've gone through, I'm not going back." It's not worth it after all the sacrifice. My uncle spent a whole week walking with a group of other people just to get to the United States. They had nothing but tortillas and jugs of water, but they made it.

Some people never make it. Some drown in the river, some get mugged and killed. A lot of people save up to pay people to take them across the border, and the crossers take advantage of them. Instead of helping them cross, they send them back or kill them.

How do you reconcile being a Christian and an undocumented immigrant?

Well, the authorities told the apostles not to do things anymore, and they said, "What's first, obey God or obey men?" We

"Just because we cross the border to find a better life, we're criminals?"

had a pastor who was illegal in Mexico. Eventually he worked out his visa so he could stay in Mexico legally, but he had a mission. I think it's all in God's purpose.

We know we're here illegally in the States, but we try to do the best we can and not break the law. I guess our only mistake, or flaw, is being here. But I don't know—I do see my parents' situation. They wanted to give us a better life. What do we do? Some people don't consider it a sin to try to find food for their family. It's debatable, I guess.

Just because we cross the border to find a better life, we're criminals? Tough to say.

As a Christian, it's in the back of my mind, "Oh, I wish I wasn't illegal here." I bet it's the same for most people.

Isn't it difficult to live here without legal documentation?

It is hard. It's hard because you can't get a license, and they require a license for a lot of things, like a bank account. They're making it easier for insurance, but if you don't have a license, you can't get insurance. If you get pulled over, you get a ticket for driving with no license. You can't get insurance, and that's another ticket.

A lot of kids are being brought up here not knowing they're illegal until they grow up. The kids know perfect English and everything. Some of them can't even read Spanish. . . .

You could be working here for years, but you can't reclaim any taxes. They collect them automatically from the paycheck, but we never get anything back.

Is mistreatment around here a problem?

A lot of people get abused in the States. Maybe not around here as much, but they pay less because they know the immi-

grants need to work—that's why they came. They pay less, no benefits, overtime, nothing. I don't see that as much here as I hear about from other parts.

What do you think should be done about documents?

Will it be OK to give visas to all Hispanics? I don't know. There are a lot of Hispanics in Texas and California. Lately, there's a lot of Hispanics here too. When we arrived, we knew the Hispanics in the area. Now we don't even know how many there are.

Is there any way people can help undocumented Hispanics?

Just pray. In the Bible, God says to do justice, help the widow, the poor, and the *extranjero*—the alien. It doesn't tell you how, but it tells you not to take advantage of them. Pay the worker well. Help the widow, the orphan, the poor, the foreigners because you were foreigners once in Egypt. I guess it comes back to doing good and not evil.

The people of Israel had quite a time getting away from Egypt. What is it like for immigrants today?

It's a risk. People of all ages try. There's pregnant ladies, children, older people. If you're going to do it, it's a big decision. It's something to think about, especially when you're going to move with the whole family.

Is it worth the risk?

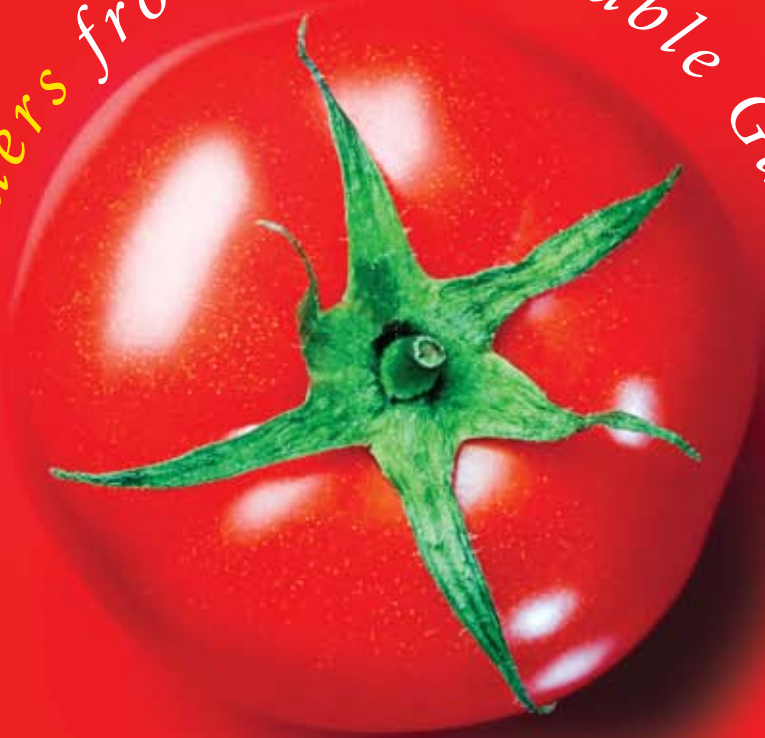
It has been, I think. It has been. ■

Interested in immigration reform? So is the CRC's Office of Social Justice. Check out the immigration issue page at www.crcjustice.org.



Adrianna Oudman, from Wheatfield, Ind., is a student at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, where she is majoring in Spanish and theology, with a missions emphasis. She has worked with Hispanic people in a variety of settings in the United States and abroad.

Wonders from My Vegetable Garden



e **VERY SPRING** I get a call from Jeannette. I've never actually met her, but she phones me faithfully once a year. We usually chat a bit like old friends, but then we get down to business—she is calling to schedule a time for her husband to come and till my garden. After her call, one day I come home from work and the ground is freshly turned, ready for another season of the wonder and delight of vegetable gardening.

Not everyone is excited about vegetables. I can't imagine the apostle Paul talking about the "vegetables of the Spirit"—can you? It's hard enough for us to cultivate the glamorous, juicy, exotic *fruit* of the Spirit. Think how uninspired we'd be by vegetables.

I once thought that vegetables were boring. But after seven years of growing them, I'm completely amazed by them. Here are a few of the wonders of my vegetable garden.

The Wonder of Dirt

Jesus captured the mystery of dirt well in one of his parables. A farmer goes out to sow some seed, throws it in the dirt, forgets about it, and a few days later finds something growing all on its own.

One of the most fascinating things about dirt is that there's lots of dead stuff in it. Every year after the harvest, I uproot and mulch all the old vegetation—corn stalks, giant pumpkin leaves, cucumber vines, and more—then bury it in the earth. In the spring I spread a load of mushroom compost: a mix of cattle manure, straw, and peat moss left over from a season of mushroom production.

Into this dung and dark and dead stuff, I plant seeds. And in unseen ways, the deadness, darkness, and dung do their thing. A few days later, with the wide-eyed delight of a parent in a delivery room, I spot tiny leaves pushing themselves into the daylight. It's one of the happiest days

in the garden—thanks, in part, to the mystery of dirt. When it comes to gardens, many important things happen below the surface.

The Wonder of Music

One day during my first year of growing potatoes, I came home to a delightful “sound.”

I hadn’t grown potatoes since I was a kid, when my dad would fill our entire backyard with them. I didn’t remember much about them or know what to expect. Potatoes may well be the food heroes of the world, a staple around the globe, but they are still pretty plain and ordinary.

When I got home that day, though, my potato patch was full of tiny, purple-robed, buttercup-shaped flowers, hanging one above the other like rows of choristers. They were utterly stunning and delightful—it looked like they were singing!

At harvest time I found out what they were singing about. At the end of the season, when I thrust my pitchfork into the earth, there emerged as if out of a grave the red, plump bodies of scores of Red Norland potatoes. With every plunge into the earth, I discovered what all the summer singing was about—and that the heavens are not alone in declaring the glory of God.

upward like a mountain climber. One summer I saw my plants climb 6 feet.

I can’t get over just how smart those cucumbers are. Every summer I ask myself, Who taught them to climb so well? Who taught them how to tie knots? How do they know to look for a trellis? And who told them that their best bet was to climb upward?

The Wonder of Vegetation

When I plant my seeds on a May weekend in Canada, I need to anticipate what the plants will look like at the end of July. I need to anticipate growth. And, wow, do vegetables ever grow!

Potatoes should be spaced at least 24 inches apart, corn thinned to 12 inches, pumpkins separated by a whopping 8 feet, tomatoes by 18 to 24 inches (technically, tomatoes are a berry, but in popular practice they are vegetables), and on it goes. What’s so utterly sensational about a vegetable garden is just how much vegetation and produce grows from a single tiny seed.

Take corn, for example. Corn stands in the garden like traditional Canadian mounted police in colorful regalia, peculiar and attractive all at once. I grow what is called Canadian Northern Supersweet, and the promised maturity date is about

Each corn plant contains so much variety that every summer, without fail, I can’t help but feel waves of wonder and delight.

The Wonder of Harvest

There are so many other wonders of the garden: the work of bumblebees, the mating of male and female pumpkin flowers, the sheer resilience of nature, the wonders of water and sunlight.

Another wonder to note is sharing, which is one of the most enjoyable parts of growing a garden. You not only *get* to share; you *have* to share.

One year our small patch of cucumber plants produced more than 300 cukes. And I’ve discovered that three Early Girl tomato plants will easily produce 60 to 75 tomatoes. Potatoes average 10 to 15 spuds per plant. Last year from only four plants I harvested 15 spaghetti squash—big ones!

With vegetables, you can’t help but get into the giving spirit. I suppose that’s what Jesus had in mind when he spoke of the wonder of his kingdom and how, given the right conditions, believers can bear fruit forty-, sixty-, even a hundredfold. God’s kingdom is about sharing.

Speaking of Jesus, maybe this is the true and final wonder of gardens—that Jesus knew of, noticed, and paid attention

I can’t get over just how smart cucumbers are.

The Wonder of Intelligence

Cucumbers, in many ways, are fussy things. They like a lot of heat, a lot of water, not a lot of handling, and apparently don’t do well next to potatoes. But in other ways they are remarkable and intelligent plants.

Along with vines and leaves and flowers and fruit, a cucumber plant grows thin, wire-like appendages that reach out to search their surroundings like antennae. When they find something to hang on to, they act like twist-ties—wrapping themselves around trellises or wire or wood or even other plants so the cucumber plant can climb up toward the sun.

During the hot months of July and August, the cucumber plant heads steadily

70 days. In other words, given the right conditions of heat and water and sunlight, you can almost see it growing. By the beginning of July, corn in Alberta grows to about knee height. But throughout July it will easily grow another 4 feet! Corn’s *rate* of growth in itself is amazing, but if you look at *how* the corn plant grows, it’s truly marvelous.

From one shriveled corn seed comes an amazing plant. There is the hard and strong bamboo-like stalk with its Styrofoam-looking interior tubes; the long, narrow, ribbon-like leaves; the layered blankets of green that wrap the ears; the cob with its assembly of kernels, tightly set like cobblestones; the long, flowing silk; and finally the tassel that shines at the top like a star on a Christmas tree.

to the beauty and mystery and delight and marvels of soil and seeds and growth and productivity and flowers and fruit. He must have, because he talked about these things all the time and he used them to teach us about the mystery and wonder and delight of his kingdom.

So after another long, cold Edmonton winter, May has come again and Jeanette will call and I will buy seeds and my garden will get turned and another season of wonders will begin. I can hardly wait. ■



Rev. Ron Klok is pastor of Centrepointe Community Church in Edmonton, Alberta.

G R I S I N G H O P E



Students at Jerico Christian School

“Christian education has affected my life in marvelous and exceptional ways, has helped me grow as a person.”

by Lois Craven

Life in the *bateyes*—low-income sugarcane villages in the Dominican Republic—is harsh. It’s especially difficult for Haitian immigrants who were lured to the *bateyes* under false pretenses or taken there under duress, who fled there for political asylum, or who were born there to immigrant parents of Haitian descent.

Medical assistance is rudimentary or nonexistent for those whose job it is to cut sugarcane. Sleeping on dirt floors or on iron beds without mattresses, families of five or more share living quarters that are often as small as 9 feet by 10 feet.

Although sugarcane remains the Dominican Republic’s main agricultural export, many of the government-owned plantations have stopped production due to stricter controls on immigration.

Meanwhile, Haitian cane cutters still work on some government and private farms. To remain competitive with international markets that use mechanized harvesters, the sugarcane workers are paid a wage that is below the minimum wage for farm workers.

In the *bateyes*, there is limited or no electricity and usually no running water. There is often no public schooling for the children of those who work in the cane fields, and what exists is of a low standard.

But three organizations—Christian Reformed World Missions, COCREF (Colegio Cristianos Reformados or “Christian Reformed

Schools”), and Worldwide Christian Schools—are trying to make a difference, at least in the area of education. It is not easy, given the resources needed to do an adequate job and the fact that the government has ignored the education needs of Haitian families. But there are success stories.

One such story involves a young woman from a small town in the interior of the Dominican Republic. She attended a COCREF elementary school in San Mateo, from there moved on to a COCREF high school, and then went to college. Today she teaches English and Spanish at the school she first attended.

Another success is Jerico Christian School, located in a *batey* about an hour northeast of the capital city, Santo Domingo. Jerico Christian School began offering classes in 1988. Meeting in the Christian Reformed Church of Fao, it provides hope for struggling families.

COCREF says that the majority of students from all of its 21 schools go on to college, and many have entered and won various academic competitions. In addition, many alumni are working as teachers, principals, doctors, and lawyers.

“Christian education has affected my life in marvelous and exceptional ways, has helped me grow as a person, and has taught me how great is the love of Christ towards us,” one high school student says.

“Our students are excellent,” says Sandra Villanueva,

COCREF's executive director. "What encourages us most doing this work with the children is to see their changed lives, and seeing the parents accept Jesus when they see their children changed."

Today, Jerico Christian School meets in a four-classroom building that Worldwide Christian Schools built near the local church. The school has bathrooms and a security wall. Students from preschool through fifth grade attend classes and prepare for a brighter future.

"The mission of our ministry is to provide holistic Christian school education to children and youth in marginalized communities where mostly Haitian immigrant families live in the Dominican Republic, helping them to achieve academic excellence and become men and women according to God's purposes for them and develop knowledge and skills to serve society," says Mario Luis Matos, chair of COCREF's board of directors.

But fulfilling that mission can seem next to impossible, since COCREF serves the most disadvantaged population in the Dominican Republic.

The schools charge tuition, and 71 percent of their resources come from the communities they serve. Revenue also comes from international sources, including Christian Reformed World Missions, Worldwide Christian Schools, and the relief arm of the Netherlands Reformed congregations.

Even so, the schools are still underfunded. With no increase

in six years to teachers' already low salaries, last year COCREF lost 41 percent of its teachers to government-funded public schools—where only 46 percent of the students pass national exams, compared to COCREF's 84 percent.

To meet this pressing need, CRWM, COCREF, and Worldwide Christian Schools-USA have launched a student-sponsorship program called "Hope Rising." The program will provide funding for students and an opportunity for personal relationships to grow and flourish, engaging students and sponsors in mutual encouragement and learning.

Hope Rising plans to grow at a measured pace, starting with one school. The program will expand to another school when all of the students at the first school who are eligible for the program have a sponsor. If one child has received a sponsorship pledge, all of the children in that family will also receive support.

Families in the U.S. can support this program by visiting the Hope Rising website at <http://us.wwcs.org/hoperising>. Canadians can support the initiative through CRWM-Canada's COCREF program (www.crwm.org/projects) or WWCS-Canada's School Sponsorship program (www.wwcs.ca). ■



Lois Craven is Director of Advancement Operations for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Nigerian CRC Sends Pastor to Sierra Leone

Last fall the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) commissioned Rev. Ezekiel James Sudu, his wife, Tabitha, and their children to serve in Sierra Leone for at least two years, beginning in February. Excitement for the Sudus' new ministry is so high that by the time of their commissioning service, the family had received more than 15 months of financial support.



Rev. Ezekiel Sudu and family

The Sudus' appointment to Sierra Leone shows the growth of the Nigerian church since Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) began ministry in Nigeria almost 70 years ago. Churches that began out of North American evangelism efforts are now sharing the gospel with others.

"[Rev. Sudu's] service in the Eastern Kambari Area (EKA) and passion for cross-cultural work led the CRCN to appoint him to work in Sierra Leone," says Matthew Lanser, a CRWM missionary who met Sudu in the EKA. Sudu had worked in the EKA for five years, encouraging the evangelists there.

The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria is one of CRWM's ministry partners in Nigeria. In 1974 CRCN formed a missions department to work with some of Nigeria's 60 unreached people groups. This marks the first time it has reached into a mission field outside Nigeria.

Sudu joins Rev. John Phiri, a CRWM-supported missionary from the Christian Reformed Church of Zambia, in ministering to the rapidly growing Christian Reformed Church of Sierra Leone (CRCSL). CRWM, CRCN, and CRCSL are partnering to support Sudu's ministry.

—Sarah Van Stempvoort,
Christian Reformed World Missions

Students Promote Peace Through Hope Equals

A barbed-wire-topped barrier erected by the Israeli government snakes across the West Bank to separate Israelis from Palestinians.

In some places it's merely a fence; in others it's a wall complete with guard towers. In still other places it separates the homes of Palestinians from the farms or businesses where they once worked.

When Micah Schuurman, a student at Calvin Theological Seminary, first encountered the wall on a recent trip to the West Bank, he was deeply troubled. It left him with a startling image.

"I felt as if my bloody fingerprints were all over it—both from being from the U.S., which supports Israel, and coming from a German heritage," which reminded him of what the Nazis did to Jews during the Holocaust, Schuurman says.

Today, as a participant in Hope Equals, a new program instituted by Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM), Schuurman says he would like to help bridge the wall and bring Israelis and Palestinians together.



A portion of the wall between Israel and Palestine

Hope Equals is a campaign for peace geared to attract young Christians interested in learning about and having an impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Younger people are often suspicious of traditional missions' ability to truly impact cultures, says Jacob Speelman, a Calvin College student. "Hope Equals is an interesting direction to see World Missions go."

Hope Equals resulted from focus groups CRWM held to ask young people how they would like to be involved in mission work. The resounding answer: by impacting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Hope Equals is beginning by establishing groups of young people on college campuses across North America. It has connected groups at Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Cornerstone College in the United States and Trinity Western University in British

Columbia, Canada. Other colleges, such as Hope College in Holland, Mich., have also shown interest.

"The model that Hope Equals uses for working with young adults is empowerment; we lead by following," says Mariano Avila, coordinator of the project. "The young adults have a passion for this issue, and we come beside them and ask them what they need to be more effective advocates."

Partnering with CRWM are the CRC's Office of Social Justice and, unofficially, the Reformed Church in America through Marlin and Sally Vis, who have worked in Jerusalem and helped to advise CRWM as it developed the program. Bethlehem Bible College in Bethlehem, on the West Bank, has expressed interest in being part of the project; peace groups in Israel and Palestine also have shown interest.

Part of the project will involve taking young people to the Middle East to see firsthand the troubles between Israelis and Palestinians, says Albert Hamstra, coordinator of special projects for CRWM.

"Historically, the CRC has had almost no involvement in this issue, so the most honest thing is to find Israelis and Palestinians who are already experienced in peace and reconciliation work, then support their work," says Avila.

For more information, see the Hope Equals website at www.hopeequals.org.

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications



Training Leaders in Bangladesh

Rangit Biswas was 21 years old in 1975, when he enrolled in his first certificate-level course at the College of Christian Theology Bangladesh (CCTB), a partner of Christian Reformed World Missions. Like other students, he brought his own bedding and slept on the classroom floor.

After he received his certificate, Biswas was able to help form a church council, lead a church, and participate in church ministries. “I want to give thanks to God,” he says of the training he received and how it helped him in church leadership.

Today Biswas is a supervising pastor of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha in the Barial region in south-central Bangladesh. He has completed every course offered by CCTB, and in 2006 he completed his master’s degree in Christian studies.

Biswas has gone from attending his first seminar to teaching seminars and leading groups of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) students throughout southern Bangladesh. TEE, he says, enables students to study in their local church environment and encourages church involvement. It also makes theological study more readily available to women.

Christian Reformed World Missions partners with CCTB, providing expertise to help train pastors and church leaders. Like traditional seminaries, CCTB offers residential



Rev. Rangit Biswas

bachelor’s and master’s degrees. But at the heart of CCTB is the certificate and diploma level TEE courses.

“CCTB does create new leaders,” says Biswas. “If we did not have the TEE program, we could not fill the gap of leadership.”

Using a unique method with three components—home study, weekly discussion groups, and practical application—Theological Education by Extension meets one of the greatest needs of the church in Bangladesh: the need for theologically trained leaders.

In three years Biswas’s TEE group has completed five courses. As facilitator, Biswas helps students discuss real-life ministry applications. He encourages students to apply what they are learning immediately to their work and ministry.

“If I listen, I can learn,” says Ganandra Das, a student at CCTB. By taking the B.Th.

course, he has deepened his knowledge of the Bible. “I came from a rural church and without this opportunity I would not be able to study theology,” says Das.

Christian Reformed World Missions’ partnership with CCTB is one example of how missionaries are helping partners around the world with curriculum development and providing direct instruction of theological courses to seminaries around the world, multiplying efforts to transform lives and communities worldwide.

—Lois Craven,
Christian Reformed World
Missions

Easter to Pentecost Missions Highlight

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. . . .” (Romans 1:16)

Home Missions and World Missions have joined efforts to shine a spotlight on how God has used members of the Christian Reformed Church to bring the message of salvation to people in North America and around the world. From Easter to Pentecost, Home and World Missions will focus on a shared theme from Romans 1:16, “Reaching Your Community and the World with the Power of the Gospel.”

For a downloadable devotional and two ministry highlight videos, please visit www.crcna.org/powerofthegospel.



Family Gatherings

When I was a child, my family lived very far from my grandparents. While we lived in Michigan, my father's parents lived in New Jersey and my mother's parents in Redlands, California. Contact with my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins was limited.

Visiting either family was always a treat. But because my mother's sister and brothers, of whom there were six—along with nearly 30 children—all lived in California, the visits to Redlands were my favorite. There was always one special evening when everyone, including Grandma and Grandpa, would gather at a local park for a grand picnic.

Those picnics are among my fondest memories. Cousins whom I seldom saw seemed like old friends. It never took long to pick up where we'd left off. And while there were a few kid squabbles and no doubt a few tears shed, those disagreements have long since been purged from my mind, and I relish the simple memories of family.

I share this with you because such gatherings are not limited to our blood relatives. There are times when we, as children of our heavenly Father, come together for similar family "picnics." Often these assemblies take place around a communion table or a potluck or a church picnic. Sometimes they are local; sometimes denominational. Once in a great while—perhaps once in a lifetime—there are opportunities to have a family picnic with our "cousins" from around the world.

In a few weeks, the Christian Reformed Church will host what may well be the largest and broadest gathering of Reformed churches ever to take place. The Uniting General Council of

the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council will gather at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., from June 18-26 to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches. We expect a thousand delegates and hundreds of official visitors and guests representing more than 80 million Christians from nearly 250 Reformed denominations.

Much like a family picnic, this gathering will be one of those rare times when cousins come together to celebrate what we hold in common as Reformed Christians. People from around the world, together in one place, will celebrate the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

As we gather, the world will watch with interest. They will see that what unites us as the family of God is far more powerful and important than what divides us. They will observe that Jesus' prayer for unity can be lived out in the lives of his followers. As these delegates from around the world come together, each with his or her own language, culture, and customs, they will be a living testimony that the miracle of Pentecost has overcome the curse of Babel and that in Christ we form one body.

In a vision the disciple John saw "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9). In a small way, the Uniting General Council will be a glimpse on earth of John's heavenly vision.

We are the church, the body of Christ. Each of us is a different part, with different gifts, different cultures, different languages, and different perspectives, but together we are his body. Together we can and do make a difference. And together we can demonstrate the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

For more information about the Uniting General Council and the events of this summer, please visit the website www.reformedchurches.org. ■



ISTOCKPHOTO

“ We expect a thousand delegates and hundreds of official visitors and guests representing more than 80 million Christians. ”



Rev. Jerry Dykstra is executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Calvin Physics Prof Names Asteroid

Asteroid Banneker, discovered in 2005 by Calvin professor of physics Larry Molnar and approved for naming last winter, draws its moniker from an African American man who lived from 1731 to 1806 and became an amateur astronomer at the age of 57.

Benjamin Banneker also wrote a series of almanacs that were among the best-selling books of their day. People who knew Banneker said that throughout his life he was curious and observant of the natural world around him, seeking understanding in a scientific way.

“In his later years,” added Molnar, “when he had a telescope to work with, he enjoyed

Larry Molnar named the asteroid after a famous African American.



spending long nights just viewing the heavens. His Christian faith was important to him, as was his sense of justice. His schooling and his curiosity were limited by the rigors of being a poor farmer. His opportunities were limited by his color.”

Banneker’s connections to Maryland were what first led Molnar to investigate the possibility of naming the asteroid

in his honor. Molnar grew up not far from Banneker’s home and was familiar with Banneker’s name. “In some ways he’s still a local hero,” said Molnar.

In naming the asteroid for Banneker, Molnar worked closely with the Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum in Baltimore on an

appropriate citation. When asteroid names are sent to the International Astronomy Union, which gives them a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down, the information included becomes permanently associated with the name.

Molnar’s citation for Asteroid Banneker reads: “Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806) was a freeborn African American farmer, clockmaker, writer, and scientist. Self-taught in mathematics and astronomy, he wrote

six published almanacs that sold throughout the mid-Atlantic region. He assisted in the 1791 survey of the Federal Territory (the District of Columbia).”

—Phil DeHaan, Calvin College Communications



ReFrame Engages Readers in Online Ministry

For 60 years people have been blessed by the *Today* devotional published by Back to God Ministries International. Now, through the online version of *Today*, readers have a new way to reach out to others who may need prayer or encouragement.

“Part of our prayer and goal for all our media is that the conversations flourish beyond just our team speaking to an audience,” says Rev. Steven Koster, director of ReFrame Media, BTGMI’s English-language outreach. “We want to provide a way for Web users to develop into a community of God’s people ministering to each other.”

One reader, Praveen, read a *ThisIsToday.net* devotional by CRC pastor Rev. Reggie Smith, titled “The Promise of the Spirit.” Praveen wrote in the online comments section, “I do believe that the

Spirit will connect me with Christ as mentioned [in the message]. But at times it becomes very difficult to see that the Spirit is with us—when everything around me is falling apart.”

Someone who had read the same online devotional, as well as the comment, responded: “I believe God knows what you are thinking, even before you think it. If you are in his will, I believe your prayers will be answered.”

Another reader added: “Praveen, if you are a Christian, you already have the Spirit. It has been my experience that he is already speaking. We just need to learn how to listen.”

Through online and social media, thousands of people are regularly being connected with the gospel message through one of ReFrame Media’s program websites, Facebook pages, or Twit-

ter accounts. You can be part of ReFrame Media’s social networking movement too:

- Visit ReFrame’s thought-provoking *ThinkChristian.net* blogs, daily *Walk-the-Way.net* video faith challenges, and *ThisIsToday.net* devotionals on your Twitter, Facebook, or personal blogs.
- Post a comment or respond to someone else’s question. Share your faith online. Follow ReFrame’s ministry pages. When you see someone searching, pray for him or her.
- Join ReFrame Media’s prayer team or become an online mentor. For more information, contact Todd or Barb at info@reframe-media.com.

—Nancy Vander Meer, Back to God Ministries International

A Baptism Celebration in Japan

Shigenori M., a 65-year-old tenant farmer, lives in rural Japan where the social pressures against Christians are great. Two years ago when he was going through a difficult time, he found comfort in God's Word through Back to God Ministries International's Japanese radio broadcasts. Last December, Shigenori publicly professed his faith in Christ and was baptized.

"Shigenori has never been married and, as the second son of the family, he is free from any family religious ties," explains Rev. Masao Yamashita, BTGMI's Japanese ministry leader, who had the privi-



Rev. Yamashita baptizes a man who came to faith through the radio program he hosts.

lege of baptizing Shigenori. Rev. Yamashita, who hosts the program that God used to

bring Shigenori to faith, notes that "Shigenori has been faithfully attending church since he began listening to our program."

—*Back to God Ministries International*

Church Receives Unexpected Ministry Shares Gift

An anonymous donor recently gave \$14,000 to Hillcrest Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich., to help meet Hillcrest's annual ministry shares commitment to the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

"Clearly someone whom the Lord had been blessing financially decided to be generous in their year-end giving," says Rev. Brian Bosscher, pastor of the church.

Ministry shares is an arrangement by which Christian Reformed congregations across North America contribute a per-member assessment to help fund broader ministries of the CRC. Ministry shares provide a steady stream of funding without the overhead costs associated with fund-raising campaigns.

In the past Hillcrest had always met its total ministry shares obligation. But recently that has changed with the faltering economy.

Bosscher says the special donation will not in any way lessen the church's intentions of meeting this year's ministry shares commitment: "This is a very thoughtful and loyal church. We want to be good and faithful stewards of our gifts. Being a part of the CRC family is central to our identity as a congregation."

—*Chris Meehan, CRC Communications*

Four Decades of Faith at University of Toronto



Brian Walsh

In the late 1960s Morris Greidanus, now a retired CRC pastor, called on students at the University of Toronto to do something different and quieter than causing unrest on campus. He called on them to worship God. So in 1968, Greidanus started Hart House Fellowship with support from Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Designed as an alternative community on campus, Hart House Fellowship offered lectures, film nights, and discussion groups for students.

Now simply known as the campus ministry at the University of Toronto, it's still going strong 41 years later.

"You have to acknowledge God's faithfulness in this longevity," says Brian Walsh, who has been campus pastor for the past 15 years.

Walsh was an undergraduate at the university in 1974. After he started participating in Hart House Fellowship activities, he began assisting Pastor John Veenstra, who succeeded Greidanus as campus minister, with evangelism and the weekly film series.

When Veenstra departed in the late 1970s, Walsh became even more active, helping campus pastor Dirk Pierik with a series of "vision conferences" throughout Ontario.

In 1995, after years of service, Walsh was officially appointed as the fourth campus pastor. Today he leads a team of four permanent and two part-time staff members, who all help lead worship, Bible studies, pastoral counseling, film discussions and seminars, and a weekly dinner fellowship.

—*Ben Van Houten, Christian Reformed Home Missions*

International Institute Part of Reformed Merger Events



Lyle Bierma

About 70 students from North America and elsewhere around the world will be taking seminary classes this summer as part of the “Global Institute of Theology,” a program being held in conjunction with the meeting of the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, Mich., in June.

The institute meets for two weeks in Chicago and then comes to Calvin Theological Seminary. It offers students a chance to take the for-credit core course “Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace,” which is the theme of the Uniting General Council meeting at which the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council will merge into the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Students will also have a chance to take two of four other courses for credit.

“This opportunity is particularly valuable because of the international flavor of it,” says Rev. Lyle Bierma, the CTS representative who has helped to coordinate the institute. Bierma is the Jean and Kenneth Baker Professor of Systematic Theology.

As part of the institute, students will have the chance to go on a bus tour of religious sites in West Michigan. Led by Dick Harms, Calvin College archivist, the tour will feature churches and other religious structures and institutions that help make up the faith life of people who live in and around Grand Rapids.

Students will spend two weeks at McCormick Seminary in Chicago before coming to CTS at the time that the Uniting General Council starts its work. They will have a chance to participate in many of the activities and sessions connected to the merger event.

—CRC Communications,
Calvin Theological Seminary



Welcome to the CRC

Eight pastors and two of their spouses gathered recently in Grand Rapids, Mich., to learn more about the Christian Reformed Church as part of a pilot program of the church’s Candidacy Committee, which coordinates the ordination processes of the denomination.

The event, called “Welcome to the CRC,” provided an opportunity to look at denominational ministries, the campuses of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College, and various other ministries affiliated with the CRC, says Rev. David Koll, director of candidacy.

Four of the eight pastors are Chinese and “represent a revitalization of leadership in the Chinese-American ministry of the CRC,” says Koll.

The other pastors, who hail from Mexico, Kenya, Nigeria, and Korea, had the benefit of making personal connections with each other and CRC personnel.

“The Cultural and History Tour was the highlight of the whole orientation,” one participant said, referring to a daylong tour of ministry locations in West Michigan. “Through the tour we came to understand the heritage of the CRC and how it came to become today’s CRC.”

This included visiting the Heritage Center of Graafschaap CRC, near Holland, Mich., which offers a professionally designed tour through the history of the CRC and of this founding congregation.

The guests also said they appreciated participating in the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s three-day Worship Symposium, says Koll. He anticipates making the pilot program an annual or biannual event.

Although aimed at affiliating pastors in the CRC, participants suggested opening the program to any interested pastors or church leaders. “I might very well consider that. It is a good tool to orient those who want to become more familiar with the CRC,” says Koll.

For more information on candidacy in the CRC, contact Koll at dkoll@crcna.org, or visit the Candidacy Committee’s home page at www.crcna.org/candidacy.

—CRC Communications, CRC Candidacy Committee



Pastors visit the Heritage Center of Graafschaap CRC, Holland Mich.

The Sheep of God's Pasture

Do you know any shepherds? No? If you lived in Israel in Bible times, you'd see shepherds and sheep all the time.

Sheep were important animals to God's people in the Bible. People raised sheep for wool, meat, and milk, and used their skins to make parchment to write on. Sheep were also used as sacrifices to remind God's people that one day Jesus would give his life to make us right with God.

Sheep were important, but they weren't good at taking care of themselves. They needed a shepherd to keep them healthy and safe. Maybe that's why the Bible compares US to sheep so often. We're not always good at taking care of ourselves either. We need Jesus, our Good Shepherd, to guide us.

Read on for more fun facts about sheep!

The Sheep Psalm

Psalm 23, one of the most well-known Bible passages, was written by King David, who was a shepherd when he was a boy. By comparing us to sheep and God to a shepherd, this psalm shows how well God cares for us.

Read Psalm 23, then check out the sheep behavior facts below. Behind each fact, write the verse or verses from Psalm 23 that relate to that sheep fact.

Sheep won't lie down unless they feel completely safe and comfortable.

Verse _____

Sheep are scared of lots of things.

Verse _____

Sheep will never eat when a predator or enemy is close. They'd rather run!

Verse _____

Shepherds in Bible times rubbed olive oil on sheep's cuts and scratches to help them heal.

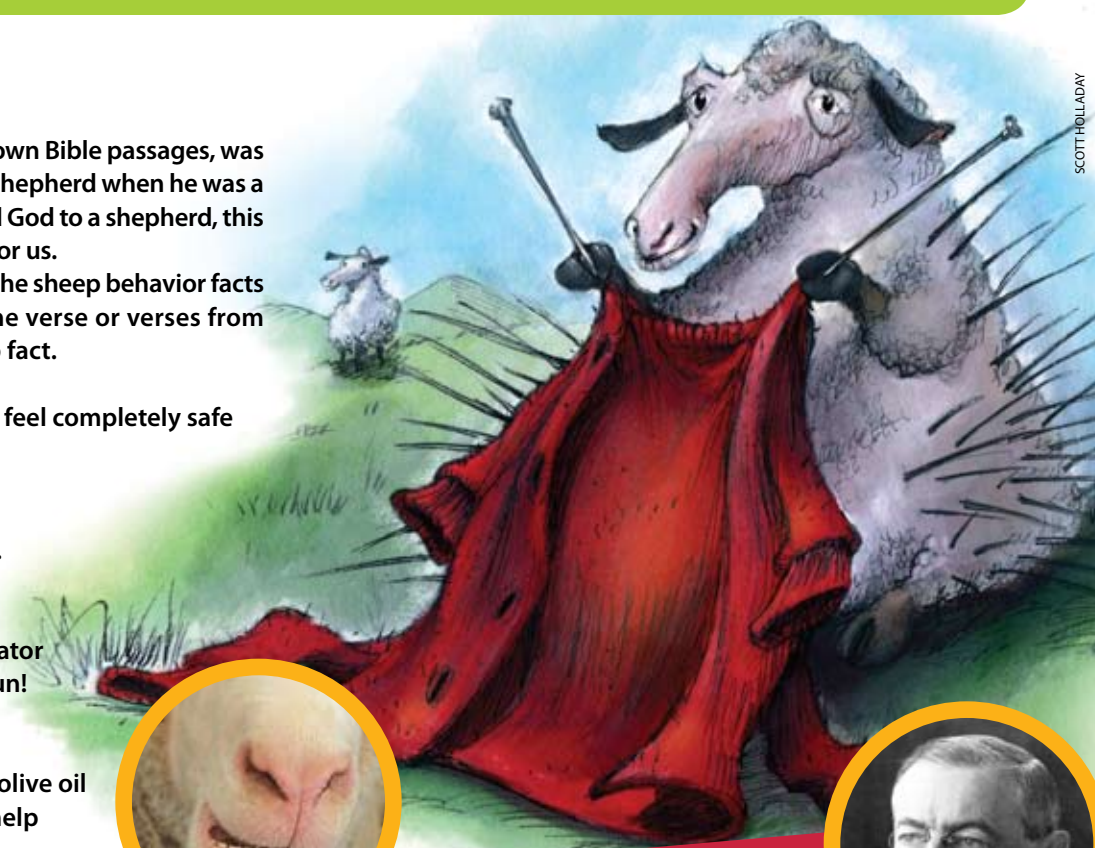
Verse _____

Sheep depend on their shepherd to help them find good food and water and to protect them from predators.

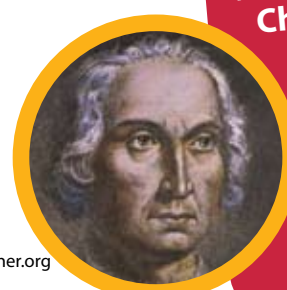
Verse _____

In Bible times, shepherds used a "rod" to fight off predators and a "staff" to rescue sheep.

Verse _____



SCOTT HOLLADAY



Funny Sheep Facts

Sheep don't have top teeth—they have thick gums called a "dental pad."

U.S. president Woodrow Wilson kept a flock of sheep on the White House's South Lawn to trim the grass. Their wool was also sold to raise money for the Red Cross during World War I.

The first sheep in North America may have been brought by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493.

Some of the most well-known Bible people were shepherds: Abel, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, the prophet Amos, and King David all tended sheep.

A recent study showed that sheep can remember the faces of up to 50 other sheep for more than two years.

Sheep Search

There are hundreds of breeds of sheep in the world! Find these 10 wild and crazy sheep in the word search below. (And try saying "sheep search" five times fast!)



Churra



Dalesbred



Faeroes



Jacob



Longwool



Merino



Mouflon



Racka



Sardinian



Zwartbles

C A D P Z Z J A P P C E N R L
 Q S Y A D G H S Z V I O L O A L
 N B E Q L G O W G N O L L C V
 H C U O B R E A S C A R E S F K N
 V H J I R R A C R R H V A R O O F
 U H W T T E O A S R H E M R O O F
 U U E B Y U A Y R L F D I N C K W
 K J L W H K Z M F F X D I N C K W
 C E U C Z Y T C X O T R A B B
 S Y B Z Y T C X O T R A B B
 N I F J I N Q O T R A B B
 M E R J I N Q O T R A B B
 A V K U N C M A U B P A A B
 Z S N N C M A U B P A A B



Baa-Ha-Ha

Q. Why was the sheep arrested on the freeway?

A. For doing an illegal ewe-turn.

Q. What do you get if you cross a sheep with a porcupine?

A. An animal that can knit its own sweaters.

Q. What do you get when your sheep studies karate?

A. A lamb chop.

Getting Fleeced

To watch a video of a sheep getting a haircut, check out this link: www.tinyurl.com/yzw6qk2 (or search YouTube.com for "Sheep Shearing Made Simple"). Does it look like the sheep is having fun?



Sandy Swartzentruber works for Faith Alive and is a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She enjoys wearing wool if it's not too itchy.

We are [God's] people,
 his well-tended sheep.

—Psalm 100:3, *The Message*

Teens, Sexting, and the *Playboy* Under the Mattress

IT STANDS TO REASON that sex education begins at birth. What children and teens learn about the difference between sexual love and pornography begins with their parents' lifestyle. Although young children often show great embarrassment when they see their parents kiss or snuggle, they are learning invaluable lessons about love, affection, touch, and closeness that provide the underpinnings of their own sexual development.

By the time children reach puberty, however, parents must be more intentional in what they teach them about the relationship between love and sex. Yet many Christian couples do not know the difference between erotica (sexual passion experienced in relationship) and pornography (sexual stimulation apart from a relational bond).

The former focuses on mutual passionate expression and discovery of each other, whereas the latter focuses on sexual stimulation and sexual release. The one speaks of love and desire for closeness to someone; the other essentially uses another person to satisfy a personal need. The one is sanctioned by God and protected through marriage; the other is not.

Parents must be absolutely clear about the devastating impact pornography can have on a child's developing sexual identity and therefore resolve to be vigilant about protecting their children from exposure. That means not tolerating pornography in the home; that means installing protective filters on the family computer (which is placed in an open and accessible space). That also means being aware of the latest disturbing trend called "sexting," whereby kids as young as age 12 send sexually explicit texts or sexually explicit photos or videos of themselves via their cell phones to their friends.

It's important that parents talk to their young teens about the implications of such trends. Parents must insist that any cell phones owned by their children—as with any other media—are subject to rules for their use and to periodic monitoring.

Teens have a natural and normal curiosity about sex, which comes to expression when they begin to get romantically involved with each other. But it also comes to expression when they "find" sexually explicit literature or photos and hide them somewhere in their bedrooms.

Parents will sometimes, much to their horror, discover such literature or photographs. How should they react? It's tempting to express dismay or disgust in immediate and strong terms. However, I encourage parents to experience such a discovery as a teachable moment. Ask your children about their interest in sex, what they know, and what attracted them to bringing the material into the house. Look at it with them or read passages of the offending literature out loud

with them in a dispassionate way. Having to look at this "forbidden fruit" with their parents can rob the images of their enticing power very quickly for a son or daughter.

Use the opportunity to talk about the difference between erotica (sex and love) and pornography (sex apart from love). Encourage them to read the "Song of Songs" and to begin to understand the sexually explicit passion described between the "Lover" and the "Beloved." Talk about the meaning of a sexual relationship and why God chose to place such passion within the confines of marriage.

Sex is a God-given gift. Parents can help their teens develop a healthy view of sex by having an affectionate and respectful relationship with each other, by being vigilant, and by helping their teens navigate popular culture through open and frequent discussions in an atmosphere of mutual trust. ■

**Pornography
can have
a devastating
impact on
a child's
developing
sexual identity.**



Judy Cook is a family therapist living in Hamilton, Ontario. She is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster.

An Unwanted Test

“**D**EAR BROTHERS and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be whole and complete, lacking nothing.”

These words, from James 1:2-4, have taken on a special meaning in my life.

About two years ago I prayed that God would make me a more compassionate person. Although I never could have imagined it, God used a series of sad and terrible events in my life to provide a lasting answer to that prayer.

After trying for what seemed like ages to get pregnant, my husband and I were ecstatic to find out that we would be having a baby! We sat at our first doctor’s appointment, giddy to see our miraculous bundle of joy appear on the ultrasound monitor.

But then the doctor started saying things like, “Hmmm” and “I’m not sure what this means.” Finally we heard her say, “I’m sorry, there is something wrong here. There is no baby. It appears you have a rare condition called a molar pregnancy. We will need to monitor you very closely for the next six months.” She reached out to hold my hand.

Over the next weeks and months my feelings stampeded to catch up with me as I began to understand what had happened and what it meant. Though it would take several more months for me to hit bottom, I started to realize that my own strength could not carry me through; God would have to give me the stamina I needed. I decided then to ask God to make unmistakably clear to me what he wanted me to learn through the experience.

As the first weeks went by, the news was all good; my body was healing rapidly.



I felt angry at people who took their kids for granted in any way.

Until one afternoon in December. The doctor called to inform us that this strange thing had come back in the form of a cancerous growth. I would require a mild form of chemotherapy until the growth was gone, and then we would have to wait an additional year before we could even begin to think about having a baby.

Suddenly everything was completely uncertain.

Resentment crept into my life. Despite my prayers for God to take away my bitterness, I felt angry at teenage mothers and at anyone who complained about having kids, ignored their kids, refused to care for or discipline their kids, or took them for granted in any way.

Over and over I asked God to remove those feelings of animosity. One day, finally, they were just gone. God, as he always is, was faithful.

Looking back at the past few years, I know now that God’s plan is far greater than my own. God has taught me patience, empathy, and compassion—all virtues

that I honestly needed a lot more of. And in teaching me these, God answered past prayers, although not in a way I had ever hoped for or imagined.

The blessings that have come out of such a difficult situation have far outweighed the inconveniences. Today I would not change anything, even if there were a way I could go back. I enjoyed one of the best summers I ever had, went on a church missions trip, became closer to my husband, and drew nearer to God through prayer, Scripture reading, Bible study, and the kindness of so many people.

Update: In February 2009, Adria was declared cancer free. The following month she and her husband, Steve, discovered they were expecting. At their six-week appointment, in the same room, they again heard the doctor say, “Hmmm. Interesting . . .” followed by a long silence. But this time she added, “It looks like you’ve got two of them in there.”

Adria and Steve celebrated the birth of twins Peter and Joy on Nov. 6, 2009. ■



Adria Van Wyk lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., where her family attends Mayfair CRC. A music teacher, she is taking this year off to care for infant twins.

The Allure of *Avatar*

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“YOU’VE GOT TO SEE AVATAR,” wrote my friend. A doctoral student in philosophical studies who breathes skepticism, my friend is not known for gushing, particularly at Hollywood productions.

Yet *Avatar* had rushed his jets because, he said, it told the *truth*. Not the accurate truth about historical events, or the warm truth about relationships, or the scientific truth about exploration and discovery, but the truth about meaning, about existence, about life, and about God.

The movie industry sells a lot of the fluff and mediocrity that audiences crave because we want quick-fix emotional escapes. But in Hollywood’s squalid mix there are “utopias.” Thomas More coined that term for his 1516 social critique, combining the Greek words for “no” and “place” to speak of a Neverland that we desperately want but cannot find.

Avatar brings a lump to our throats because what springs to life in 3-D splendor is a utopia that meets five of our hearts’ longings:

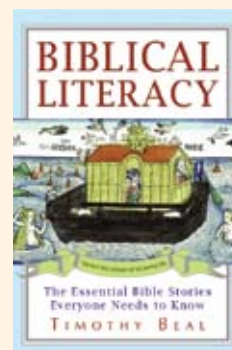
1. It criticizes our current world’s crass materialism.
2. It inspires in us the contours of a world where truer, purer values guide us.
3. It cleanses us by setting in stark contrast the baser drives we too often express and the higher moral values that can shape us.
4. It calls to us with the voice of kind wisdom that resonates with our deepest feelings, beckoning us home.
5. It portrays characters who make the journey ahead of us, giving us hope that we can follow them.

Although More’s *Utopia* doesn’t grab me quite the way it did others in his age, I understand why they were thrilled. I have my own list of utopias that come out when people ask about “best books” and “favorite movies.” While I can’t always explain my choices, this I know: something of the coming kingdom of God whistles through them, yanking me into eternity, even for a brief moment. It is indeed like poet and cancer victim Donna Hoffman wrote in her waning months: “My feet stumble, but ah, how my heart can soar!” ■



Wayne Brouwer teaches at Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich.

In Hollywood’s squalid mix there are “utopias.”



Biblical Literacy

by Timothy Beal
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Timothy Beal, professor of religion at Case Western Reserve University, argues that “biblical literacy is a prerequisite for cultural literacy.” While acquainting readers with “the essential Bible stories everyone needs to know,” he addresses both believers and unbelievers. He shows how anti-war songs, black spirituals, pop music, political speeches and documents, art, relief organizations, common phrases, and metaphors all borrow from the Bible. Throughout the book, he asks tough and sometimes controversial questions to encourage readers to wrestle with the text. (HarperCollins)



The Curious Garden

by Peter Brown
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Can a garden have a mind of its own, growing where it chooses and transforming all that it touches? When young Liam discovers dying plants on an unused train track, he decides to nurture them. He soon realizes that he's stumbled upon a curious, restless garden that moves relentlessly through his drab city, metamorphosing both its dreary atmosphere and its inhabitants. Brown's picture book allows children and adults alike to experience the joy of gardening in God's world. (Little, Brown)



Kiva.org

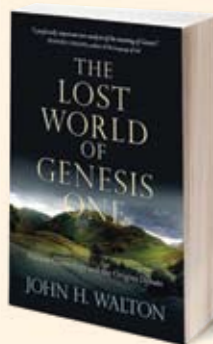
reviewed by Ray Wiersma

Looking for a unique way to impact someone's life? A micro-lending website called Kiva (www.kiva.org) empowers people around the world "to earn their way out of poverty." For as little as \$25, you can provide a low-income entrepreneur with funds to purchase start-up materials for his or her business. Kiva organizes both the transaction and a repayment plan for the borrower. Track the progress of your loan online and choose to either cash out at the end of the repayment period or re-loan your money to a new entrepreneur. (For a similar ministry, see partnersworldwide.org.)

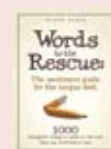
The Lost World of Genesis One

by John H. Walton
reviewed by Kenneth J. Van Dellen

Walton expands on his very readable NIV Application Commentary on Genesis, suggesting that we have to keep in mind both the culture and the language of the biblical text. Walton explores the meaning and use of the Hebrew word *bara* ("create") as well as the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cosmologies and their ideas of a "firmament." He builds the case that in the days of Genesis, God assigned function to an existing creation: his temple. This understanding, Walton notes, eliminates all of the arguing over origins. (InterVarsity)



THE LOWDOWN



Rescue Me: If you've ever wished you had the perfect words for a sympathy card or a note of encouragement, *Words to the Rescue* by Steve Fadie is for you. (Orange Sky Press)



To Market: *Southern Living Farmers Market Cookbook* is perfect for the cook who isn't quite ready for the slow food movement but wants to use more seasonal items from the farmer's market in combination with convenience foods from the grocery store. (Oxmoor House)

Online Alert: In our March issue, media editor Ron DeBoer asked for readers' suggestions for additional movie titles that inspire and inform people about living with disabilities. You delivered! Check out the list of additional titles at www.TheBanner.org.

Invictus

reviewed by Ron DeBoer

It's fitting that the 20th anniversary of Nelson Mandela's release from prison is marked by the release of *Invictus*.

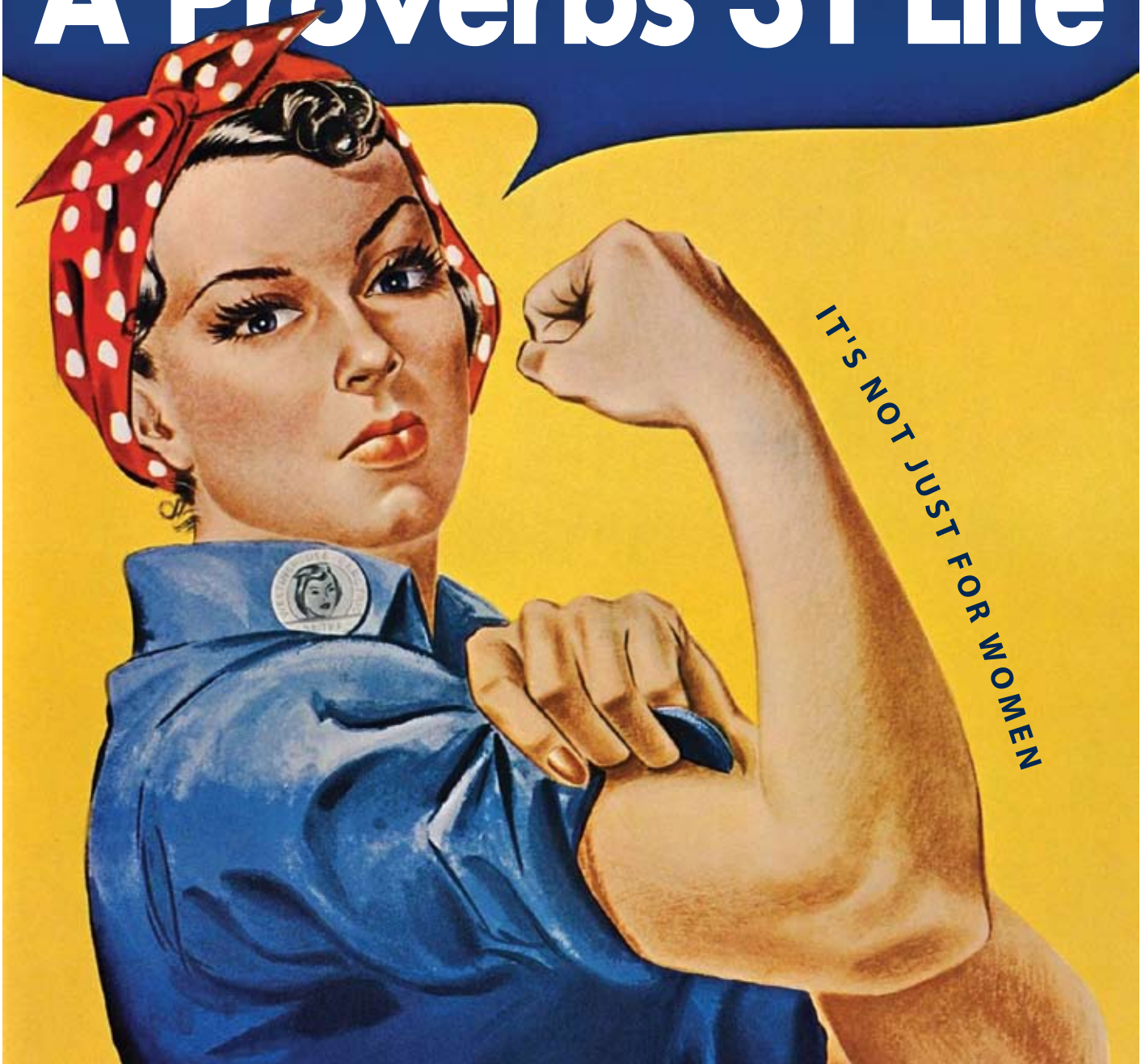
Starring Morgan Freeman

and Matt Damon, *Invictus* tells how Mandela, newly-elected president of South Africa, used the national rugby team's bid for the World Cup to unite the country. "Forgiveness liberates the soul," Mandela says. "It removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon." *Invictus*, named after the title of a famous 19th-century poem by William Ernest Henley, is a film about forgiveness, servant leadership, and the special relationship between two unlikely heroes. (Warner Bros.)



BY THEA LEUNK

A Proverbs 31 Life



GRACE IS DECEITFUL AND BEAUTY IS VAIN; but a woman that feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised. Proverbs 31:30” (ASV).

As a girl I recited that verse in unison with my fellow Calvinettes at the beginning of each of our meetings. (First the Verse, then the Aim: “Exercise thyself unto godliness. 1 Timothy 4:7b.” And then our Song: “O Calvinettes, March Forward.”) This was my introduction to a passage that has haunted women for centuries—the description of an ideal that causes not a little good-natured eye rolling today.

The book of Proverbs was, I recall, important in our Calvinette group study of Scripture. One requirement for each rank, from Tiller to Harvester, required assembling an acrostic of verses—one verse from Proverbs for each letter of the rank name—and then reciting the verses from memory. We worked industriously, of course, to find the shortest verses possible.

Little did we know that we were mimicking the writer of Proverbs. The authors of our Old Testament wisdom literature often used acrostics. Psalms 111 and 112 are both acrostics—the first letter of each verse follows the Hebrew alphabet. Using an

True wisdom is simply lived.

acrostic made the psalm easier to memorize because if you knew your “aleph-bet,” you could figure out what word needed to come next. It created a framework for the psalm that announced, “Here is everything you need to know—from A to Z—about this subject.” For example, Psalm 111 presents everything the believer needs to know about Yahweh; Psalm 112, the full and complete life of a man who fears God; Proverbs 31:10-31, the A to Z perfections of a godly woman.

“A capable wife—who can find her?” the author of Proverbs 31 asks rhetorically, then lists 22 characteristics of the embodiment of every husband’s dream. But is that really what the author is describing—the perfect wife?

Or could the author of Proverbs be using the imagery of this ideal to invite *all* believers to glimpse what a life lived in the fear and knowledge of God, a life lived wisely, could look like within one’s community of family and village?

The Ideal Woman?

The book of Proverbs was originally a textbook for young noblemen studying how to become wise leaders. To begin, Proverbs says, set your feet on the path of knowing God and serving God with all your heart, soul, and mind. When life is guided by a sure knowledge of what God intends for each individual, then the community and, indeed, the nation, will prosper.

Wisdom is made concrete in Proverbs with the image of a woman—a woman who calls out to this group of students to travel with her on their journey to “the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:5). In chapter nine, Woman Wisdom builds a house, directs a feast to be served, and invites all who would walk in the way of insight to come and eat her bread and drink her wine. So what, then, are these students of wisdom being asked to learn from the acrostic of this last chapter?

Let’s start with that first sentence. A longer look at the original Hebrew text might startle us: “A valiant woman—who can find?” This is warrior language, a victorious song about a Deborah-like heroine who has performed amazing acts of valor. (Redeemer College professor Al Wolters is well-known for establishing the understanding, now common among Old Testament scholars, that verse 10 should be translated “valiant woman,” not “good wife.”)

This woman has strong arms that accomplish great deeds: she searches, plants, reaches, gathers, and holds. The scope of her work includes all of creation, both land and sea, and extends into both day and night. Her hands collect but also distribute—carefully seeing to the needs of everyone who relies on her, including the poor of her village. She wears the royal robes of crimson and purple and wraps herself in the scarves of dignity and strength—the very sashes that are wrapped around King Yahweh.

This is a woman of wealth, industry, and trade; she is the center of an entire community’s enterprise. And because of her

wise leadership, for she practices what she preaches, a village flourishes in the sun of Yahweh’s favor; it rests in the presence of God’s shalom. Indeed, the woman who can live so wisely is a role model to be praised with the highest possible words; a ticker-tape parade of hallelujahs will be shouted down on her as she walks through the streets of her village.

In a time when the poetry of the Israelites’ surrounding cultures praised women for their beauty, charm, and sex appeal, Proverbs offers us the refreshing gift of another portrait: a wise woman who is praised for her right living and true faith. To those young men who are learning how to be wise, the author says, “Look no further than to this valiant woman of God. Set aside your previous ideas about what makes a woman worthy and see how the wise life, a life of strength and dignity, can be found in surprising places—it can even be found in a woman!”

Rather than an impossible to-do list for women—or a text for a Mother’s Day sermon—Proverbs 31 is God’s Word to all who would seek true wisdom.

So how do we make sense of it today?

Wisdom, Our Mentor

Let’s think back to how Proverbs uses Woman Wisdom as the mentor for students who would learn how to rule wisely. What better conclusion for this class than to take them on a field trip, to bring them to a woman of flesh and bone, of soul and spirit, who doesn’t just preach about wisdom, but practices it.

“You’ve absorbed all I have to teach you,” Woman Wisdom says, “now go live it. Don’t just observe it; practice it. All I’ve been trying to teach you about living a wise life is right here before you in human flesh, an ordinary person whose faith is deep and whose life is intensely engaged in the well-being of others. Go and live your lives in the same wise way.”

A wise life, we learn, is practical and down to earth; it is not lived on a cloud of lofty platitudes. God’s ideal for all human beings, both male and female, is an ordinary life that reflects our Creator’s glory and wisdom. A wise life is marked by love for and obedience to the One who bestowed it. We can study wisdom as deeply as possible, but true wisdom is simply lived. Looking for and seizing the opportunities God places before us to plant deeds of righteousness and sow acts of compassion reflects the work of Yahweh. A wise life chooses to act in ways that serve God and others with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

“See,” God says, “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life” (Deut. 30:19). Choose a life lived wisely. Choose a life of commitment, love, and obedience to God. Choose a life that will cause those who know you to praise your Creator with shouts of “Hallelujah!” ■



Rev. Thea Leunk is pastor of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

FAQs

Mission/Calling

Q I volunteer at my church as well as work and attend to my family. I find that I don't volunteer out of love but out of duty. Is that how it's supposed to be?

A In my previous response to this question, published in the February 2010 *Banner*, I maintained that we volunteer not out of duty but out of love—for we have received grace upon grace. All our Christian endeavors, including volunteer work at church, must spring from joy and gratitude, not duty.

This month I would like to address the busyness of life we all experience in North America. Often many of us feel as though we serve out of duty simply because there is so little time left in our day, right? Every Christian is supposed to make use of his or her time, talents, and treasure for work, family, and church—the fundamental domains of our vocation.

But we trap ourselves into temptation and sin (yes, you heard me right) by neglecting one area for the sake of the others. For example, if I oriented my time, talents, and treasures around my profession in such a way that I had very few resources left for my family and church, you would diagnose me as a workaholic, someone who is neglecting my Christian calling as a husband, father, and church member, wouldn't you? Friends, that is not the way of Jesus, and his grace and truth will pronounce me a sinner in need of repentance and healing.

So we must examine how we use our time, talents, and treasures. Here are a few practical suggestions:

- Sit down with someone you trust—perhaps a spouse or a friend—and assess how you currently allocate your time, talents, and treasures. Are you working too many hours, taking your kids to sports and hobby commitments five nights a week, spending too

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the principles by which you have been conducting your life.

much time on the computer? Do you share the gifts God gave you with others? Are you a joyful tither?

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the principles by which you have been conducting your life. If you are in line with the way of Jesus, thank the Lord and celebrate. If not, repent and ask the Lord to forgive you for mismanaging the resources entrusted to you.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom as you set new boundaries for your time, talents, and treasures. You may be able to become more efficient and effective at work; at home you might need to cut back on Facebook updates and watching TV.

I am confident that the grace and truth of Jesus will accomplish changes in your life that will honor him.

—Victor Ko

Rev. Victor Ko is pastor of Mosaic House Community Church in Edmonton, Alberta.

Relationships

Q How and where can a young woman meet a godly man for marriage when there are no male young adults in her congregation and she doesn't want to feel desperate searching from church to church?

A Your desire for a life partner is normal and understandable. God designed human beings for intimacy. At the same time, like the pursuit of happiness, the more one seeks such a relationship, the more elusive it often becomes. I would suggest that you change your focus from what might exist in the future (being married) to what gives you satisfaction in your life now, as a single woman.

For example, if you feel lonely or bored, begin to explore new interests. Is there a course

of study (such as learning a new language or exploring a new hobby) that has always beckoned? If you are an outdoors kind of person, is there a biking, sailing, or skiing club you could join?

Being single and in your mid-20s is also a good stage in your life to explore what your Christian faith means for service. By all means, as part of exploring your faith, visit other churches in your area. Find out where volunteers are needed within your community and resolve to participate. Join one or more Christian singles groups to make new friends and experience a new Christian community where you can talk about your hopes and dreams as a follower of Jesus.

If there is no singles group in your area, consider starting one with the help of one or two friends. Begin by discussing what you would like such a group to be and do, along with where and when you could meet; then advertise as widely as possible to include other Christian churches.

As you focus on your own identity as a Christian and on your own interests, and as you take steps to fill your life with meaningful activities, you will meet and get to know many new people. By all means, pray that God will bring a Christian partner into your life, and stay open and alert to new friendships that may grow into something more. But rather than making it your task to find someone, allow God to bring someone to you—or not—in accordance with God's good plan for your life.

—Judy Cook

Judy Cook is a family therapist living in Hamilton, Ontario. She is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster. You may e-mail her at judycook.thebannerqanda@gmail.com. All inquiries will be held in the strictest confidence. ■

The Nicene Creed

NEAL PLANTINGA ONCE ASKED US TO IMAGINE A WORLD in which theology was a cause for casual conversation, the way people might discuss the most recent developments on *Dancing with the Stars*.

Imagine, Plantinga suggested, that you are in the barber's chair. As he begins to snip your hair, the barber asks, "What do you think: is Jesus truly God or not?" Clusters of people gather at the local coffee shop and, as they sip their chai tea and triple mocha lattes, get into heated discussions about this question. Several schools of thought form, and people begin to argue over who is right.

It may sound strange to us, but once upon a time something very close to that really happened.

After the Roman emperor Constantine became a Christian in the fourth century, the Christian faith went from a persecuted underground movement to a mainstream one. What had been discussed in whispers was now hashed out in the public square as pastors and theologians from around the Roman Empire compared notes on various doctrines. Once they started to bring their ideas together, they discovered some pretty major disagreements, a main one of which centered on Jesus.

A popular preacher named Arius believed Jesus was a lot *like* God, but Arius stopped short of saying that Jesus *was* God. Others, including a theologian named Athanasius, concluded that the witness of the New Testament was clear: the one true God existed as a Trinity of three divine persons, and the second of those persons, the Son, had also become human in the person of Jesus from Nazareth. Jesus, therefore, was not *like* God but *was and is* God. Period.

The early Church debated these matters at great length in the fourth and fifth centuries. In the end, Arius did not fare well, as you can now see in the Nicene Creed.

Although similar to the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed allows itself to get a little more technical here and there—nowhere more so than where we state that Jesus Christ is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; *of the same essence* as the Father."

These days when we recite this creed in public worship, we glide right over "of the same essence." But for the better part

Either Jesus was
truly God or
he was not.

of two centuries, this phrase caused many pastors to lose sleep. They agonized over it. They prayed over it. They, no doubt, wept over it. They simply had to get this right.

In the Greek language, the difference between "of the same essence" and "of similar essence" was just one little vowel. Jesus was either *homoousios* (the same essence) or he was *homoiousios* (a similar essence). One vowel made a big difference! Either Jesus was truly God or he was not.

We live in a time when people want to "go along to get along"; we're willing to let things slide a bit to avoid conflict. "Close is good enough," we may say.

Thankfully, when it came to the core identity of our precious Savior, the teachers and preachers of the early church did not settle for "close enough." They fought and prayed over one little vowel because in this case they knew a dear truth: if Jesus is "God from God" and "of the same essence as the Father," then our salvation is a sure thing because it is the work of God through and through. Nothing will ever stop it or undo it. Period.

So the next time you have the privilege of confessing the words of the Nicene Creed, when you get to that little phrase "of the same essence," pause long enough to whisper a prayer of thanks for all those who prayed so hard to get it right! ■



Rev. Scott Hoezee is director of Calvin Theological Seminary's Center for Excellence in Preaching in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Michigan Churches Request Classis Transfer

Convinced that only males should be ordained, two Christian Reformed churches in Michigan are seeking to join a like-minded classis (regional group of churches) hundreds of miles distant.

Second CRC of Kalamazoo, Mich., and Trinity CRC of Sparta, Mich., have requested a transfer to Classis Minnkota, a group of 15 churches located in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

“We cannot in good conscience remain in a classis that promotes



the ordination of women to the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon,” said the request from Second CRC. It is currently part of Classis Kalamazoo.

Trinity CRC, part of Classis Grand Rapids North, names

Minnkota as “the nearest classis that has the most solid and consistent unity on the issue of the Bible’s qualification for church leaders.”

Both classes approved the requests, and Classis Minnkota agreed to receive the churches, provided Synod 2010 gives its approval. Synod is the annual leadership meeting of the CRC, to be held in June.

Classis Minnkota is one of eight classes (out of 47 total) that, in keeping with their understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office, declare that women office-bearers may not be delegated to classis.

The two churches anticipate being members of Classis Minnkota until a new classis of theologically like-minded churches can be organized in Michigan.

Both churches expressed intent to continue working with their neighboring CRCs in Michigan in such areas as missions, diaconal work, and support for struggling churches.

Although a long-distance relationship with Classis Minnkota would be inconvenient and demand extra work, Rev. Warren Lammers, pastor of Second CRC, said it would be manageable with the help of modern communications technology.

New Guidelines for Abuse Cases Proposed

A report coming to Synod 2010 recommends that when an abuse allegation is brought against a leader of a Christian Reformed church, pastoral care for all the parties involved needs to be an immediate priority, along with financial provisions for abuse-related counseling.

The report proposes revisions to the CRC’s existing guidelines for handling abuse allegations, and it makes many recommendations.

When an abuse claim is brought forward, the report says the church council should immediately appoint someone accountable to the elders to ensure that the pastoral needs of all the parties (the claimant, the accused, their families, and the congregation) are addressed.

The report recommends that financial resources for abuse-related counseling be developed as a diaconal response, regardless of any future claims that may be filed. Those financial provisions could include a group of churches pooling their funds, or congregations making an arrangement with a local counseling agency.

The report also recommends that the principles of restorative justice be applied when appropriate, as opposed to a strictly adversarial approach to seeking justice for the victim.

Synod should also urge churches to review their abuse-prevention policies and liability coverage annually, and council members should participate in yearly training on topics such as the complexities of abuse situations, the report states.

For the denomination’s part, the report recommends the development of new educational resources, including a handbook that clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of church council members when allegations of sexual abuse by a church leader arise.

The denomination has had guidelines for responding to abuse allegations since 1997, and this report recommends several changes to them. The proposed revisions include a more detailed description of what is included in the definition of sexual misconduct.

The proposed revised guidelines state that when a panel is assembled to hear and

evaluate allegations, the standard of proof should be that the testimony “more likely than not” supports the allegations.

If a local council takes no action, such as imposing church discipline against a leader when warranted, or acts contrary to an abuse panel’s recommendations, the proposed guidelines now include a provision that the panel chairperson can seek intervention from either the church visitors (representatives of classis) or the classis itself. That means a local council cannot ignore or bury allegations against its pastor if a regional panel has found those allegations to be serious and probable.

Synod 2010 meets in June, and its delegates will decide whether to adopt the recommendations proposed.

The full “Abuse Victims Task Force” report is available at www.crcna.org under Resources/Synod. It is also contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2010*, which is provided in print to every congregation.

—Gayla R. Postma

Delegates to the recent meeting of Classis Grand Rapids North expressed both sadness at Trinity's request and respect for the way Trinity and its minister, Rev. C.J. den Dulk, conducted themselves—presenting their position graciously and without rancor, one delegate said.

Both Lammers and den Dulk declined to speak to *The Banner*.

Rev. Henry De Moor, professor of church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary, said the churches' requests present a challenge for Synod 2010.

De Moor said that synod allows a church to request transfer to another classis for grounds that go beyond geographical proximity, but synod did not embrace theological affinity as a new primary criterion for classis affiliation.

Allowing for such an arrangement of classes, he said, would have the potential to permanently divide the church along theological lines and keep members from learning to live in unity.

"If geographic proximity is still the main criterion, as it historically always has been," De Moor said, "then asking for a transfer from a Michigan classis to one in Minnesota and the Dakotas is certainly a stretch." —Henry Huisjen

In next month's issue:

The Banner will outline the major issues coming to this year's synod, and our July issue will contain all the news from Synod 2010.

Synod 2010 will meet June 12-19 at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Ill. For up-to-date synod information visit www.crcna.org/Synod.

CRC Urged to Seek Better Treatment for Undocumented Immigrants

Mindful that the Christian Reformed Church in North America was itself started by immigrants, the CRC should now advocate for immigration reform and practice hospitality toward today's immigrants, regardless of their legal status.

Those proposals are among the recommendations contained in a report coming to Synod 2010 (the church's annual leadership meeting).

The report, requested by Synod 2007, notes that millions of immigrants are compelled by poverty or persecution to leave their home countries, many leaving behind family and braving great danger to find a new start in North America. Those who arrive in the U.S. undocumented live in fear of being discovered and are vulnerable to mistreatment and exploitation by both employers and criminals. For many there is no path by which they can become legal residents.

In Canada temporary foreign workers can get through the bureaucracy more quickly, but they are not allowed to bring family members and have no option to continue living in Canada beyond their temporary status.

Refugees may wait years to have their claim of persecution heard, and while they wait, they get established in Canada with jobs, sometimes with marriages and children as well. If their claim is eventually denied, some remain as undocumented immi-

grants rather than risk returning to their home country.

The authors of the report acknowledge that governments are right in establishing laws to protect their citizens, including laws governing immigration. And it notes that Christians have a biblical injunction to obey the laws of the land.

But they also point to Christians who defied Hitler in Nazi Germany and civil rights leaders in the 1960s who resisted U.S. laws that discriminated on the basis of race.

"Citizenship in the kingdom of God obligates believers to the highest law of love for God and neighbor above all, and the exercise of this love should lead believers to advocate for laws that will mandate the just and humane treatment of immigrant peoples," the report states.

The report points out that a preponderance of biblical instruction—from the words of God through Moses to the parables of Jesus—requires Christians to protect and welcome immigrants.

"However various immigrants came to be in our midst, their very presence as vulnerable persons without social standing activates the Bible's long tradition of providing love and compassion without requiring lots of calculations to see if a given stranger is worthy of our love or of the gospel ministry of the church," the report states.

The committee that wrote the report recommends that the

CRC's Office of Race Relations make it a priority to raise cross-cultural sensitivity across the denomination. And it wants the church's Office of Social Justice and the Canadian CRC's Committee for Contact with the Government to advocate for policies that will lead to immigration reform and the just treatment of those without documented status in Canada and the United States.

It also calls on individual church members and congregations to speak out for immigration reform, and to speak out against unduly harsh or unjust laws and practices concerning the treatment of immigrants.

It will be up to delegates to Synod 2010 whether to adopt the report's recommendations. Synod 2010 will meet in June in Palos Heights, Ill.

—Gayla R. Postma
To read the entire "Migration of Workers" report, look under Resources/Synod at www.crcna.org. The report is also printed in the *Agenda for Synod 2010*, provided to each church.

Advertising Information

Deadlines: June issue is 5/3/10. July issue is 5/31/10. Visit www.thebanner.org for complete details.

Prices: Most ads are \$0.33^{US} per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.26^{US} per character applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements. Photos are \$22^{US} extra.

To Advertise: Place your classified ad online at www.TheBanner.org/classifieds. If you are unable to submit your ad online you may continue to email it to classifieds@TheBanner.org or fax it to 616-224-0834. If you have questions, call 616-224-0725.

Publication of advertisements implies neither endorsement nor approval by *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, or the Christian Reformed Church. We reserve the right to refuse or edit any ad for appropriateness.

Denominational and Classical Announcements

General

The council of Grace Community CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois, hereby calls all duly elected delegates to Synod 2010 to meet in the Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, on Saturday, June 12, at 9:00 a.m.

All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday afternoon, June 13, 2010, at 3:00 p.m. at Grace Community CRC, 10415 S. Kedvale Ave., Oak Lawn, Illinois. Rev. Michael J. Kooy will deliver the message.

All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 6, and on Sunday, June 13.

Council of Grace Community CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois

Change in Time of Service

Change in Worship Time Bethany CRC, Gallup, NM, will have one Sunday worship service at 10:00 a.m. beginning May 2.

Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that Samantha De Jong McCarron and Nathan Mc Carron have now completed their academic requirements and are eligible for call as candidates for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Admitted into the Ministry

At a special meeting on March 25, 2010 Classis Grand Rapids East examined and unanimously approved **CANDIDATE ANTHONY J. (TONY) CURRAN** for ordination as a minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. Synodical deputies from Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, and Lake Erie gave their concurrence. Tony will be ordained on April 25, 2010 to serve as a pastoral resident at Church of The Servant.

Al Mulder, Stated Clerk, Classis Grand Rapids East

Financial Aid

Students from Classis Rocky Mountain preparing for ordained/non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classis Ministry Leadership Team for the 2010-2011 academic year. For information, contact Bob Westenbroek, 18474 E. Columbia Circle, Aurora, CO 80013 (303)400-6723 or e-mail robertwestenbroek@comcast.net. All requests to be received by May 31, 2010.

Classis Columbia offers financial aid to those entering ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Those interested in applying may email Rev. Rob Toornstra, at artoornstra@comcast.net, or call him at 503-363-5159.

Classis Illiana's Student Fund is currently accepting applications for financial assistance for the 2010-2011 school year from Illiana students. If you will be a seminary student or college student at least a Junior level with a final goal of full-time ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, we encourage you to request an application from Rev. John Kostelyk at hammondrcr@sbcglobal.net

Congregational Announcements

General

Rev. Gary M. Stevens is available for call after his requested separation from Bethel CRC, Sun Valley CA under Article 17. He faithfully served Bethel for 7+ years and is heartily recommended. He can be reached at garmystevens@skyfiftysix.com or 818-314-9185

Retirement

The Corsica SD CRC and RCA churches announce the retirement of their pastor and his wife, Jerry and Sharon Buwolda after 41 years of service in the ministry. They have been a blessing to the entire community during the 21 years they served the area in both Corsica and New Holland SD. Their new address is 2504 E Yorkshire, Sioux Falls SD 57108.

Announcements

Celebration Open House: Celebrating 55 years of Christian Education! You are invited to join the Calvin Christian Elementary School Community in celebrating God's faithfulness in providing Christian Education for the past 55 years at 601 36th St., SW, Wyoming, MI. Wednesday, June 2, 2010, 6:30-8:30 pm, at the school. A brief program will be held at 7:00 pm.

Birthdays

101st Birthday



The friends and family of **ARNOLD (DICK) ZANDSTRA**, 1635 Fisher Street, Munster, IN 46321 want to wish him a very Happy 101st Birthday, giving thanks to God for his long life.

100th Birthday



Minnie Tobak, 819 Wilcox #24, Waupun, WI, 53963, celebrated her 100th birthday on March 26, 2010. Her family and friends are thankful for God's faithfulness and many blessings.

95th Birthday



Mary Ten Brink: Park Village Pines, 2920 Crystal Ln. Oshtemo, MI 49009, will celebrate her 95th birthday June 2. An Open House Celebration will be held at the Third Christian Reformed Church, 2400 Winchell, Kalamazoo, MI 49008 in the Fellowship Room on Sunday, June 6, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

All friends and relatives are invited. Her children, Jane and Ken, Harry and Sally, along with her 9 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren wish her God's continued blessing. Her life and faith are an inspiration for us all. We love you Mother!

90th Birthday

Robert DeBoer 423 Eagle Blvd., Kingsland, GA 31548; celebrates his 90th birthday on May 9. He is loved by his wife Edythe, Bob and Barbara DeBoer, Greg and Marla DeBoer. Six grandchildren, one great grandson.

Martin LaMaire 1040 Erie St, Oak Park, IL 60302 will celebrate his 90th birthday on May 25. Love and congratulations from his family: wife Annette, children Martha and Frank Hules, Paul and Linda LaMaire, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Thanks be to God!

Gertrude Swagman, 2700 Mulford Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546, will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 7. She is loved by her children: Bill and Ann Swagman, Jim and Ellen Bruinsma, and Beth Swagman; her grandchildren and great-grandchildren: Joel Swagman, Kirstin Swagman, Kyle and Amy Swagman (Haven and Lyric), Jason and Jessica Debbink; Steve and Alyssa Poelstra (Faith and Shane), David Bruinsma, and Betsy Bruinsma.

Richard and Dorothy Sytsma are celebrating their 90th birthdays—Dorothy on Feb. 26 and Richard on June 20. Their 5 children with their spouses, 19 grandchildren with their spouses, and 7 great grandchildren thank God for their example of faith and love. They reside at 2772 Pfeiffer Woods Dr. #6103, Kentwood, MI 49512.

Lorraine Verhoeven of Bellflower, CA, turned 90 on October 5. A family reunion party was held in Palm Desert, attended by all the children and grands. God bless you, and we love you, Mom!

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

De Kruyter, Rev. John and Angie (Beukema), 2036 Little Heron Ct. SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546 celebrated 65 years of marriage on April 27, 2010. God is good!

Van Dellen, Roger and Nell, 1600 NW Crista Shores Ln NW, # B-17, Silverdale, Washington 98383, 360-204-5518, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on 5/18/10. Family and friends are welcome to a reception on 5/29/10 from 2 PM-4 PM at Grace CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois, to celebrate God's faithfulness in their lives.

60th Anniversary

Hiemstra With thankfulness in our hearts we celebrate the 60th anniversary of John and Riemke (Huisman) May 31. Box 92 Telkwa BC v0j 2x0, 'De seine fen de Heere'

VAN TIL, Case & Rosemary (Schoon) of Highland, IN celebrate 60 yrs. of marriage on April 21. Rejoicing with them are their 4 children, 10 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren

VELDMAN Richard & Marthann (Vos) May 10; 5620 Lawn Drive, Western Springs, Ill. 60558 Congratulations & love from Jim & Ginny, John & Jane, Tim & Vicki, 8 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren. We are blessed!

WASSENAR, Robert and Jean (Zeilstra), 11020 Raleigh, Westchester, IL 60154 will celebrate their 60th anniversary on May 13. Congratulations and much love from your family: Sharon and Jack Eriks (Lisa and Mike Dekker, Jennifer and fiance Scott Stebbins, Elizabeth and Mark Van Holstyn); Sandra and Andrew Kranenborg (Brian, Amy, Steven); Ronald and Cathy (Rachel, David and Sharon); Linda and Verle Norris (Drew, Gretchen, Sarah). Great-grandchildren: Annika, Abigail, Jacob Dekker. We thank and praise God for your example and His faithfulness.

50th Anniversary

BAKKER, John and Helen (Dykstra); 1346 S. 59th Ct. Cicero, IL 60804 will celebrate their 50th anniversary on May 20th. God bless you mom and dad, grandma and grandpa.

Dorn, Marty & Grace of Orland Park, IL will celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary on May 14, 2010. Children- Ed & Laura Kelly, Eddie, Jack, Anne Marie. Lynne Schipma, Kristin, Allison, Elizabeth. Marty & Lisa Dorn, Charisa, Gerrit, Elena. Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever!

HAAK, Henry and Mariann (Hoekman), 517 3rd Ave SE, Sioux Center, IA 51250, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 1, 2010. Children: Dawn (Phil) Bonnema, Dora (Eric) van der Giessen, Janice (Kevin) Driesen, Stan (Brenda) Haak, 12 grandchildren, 4 step-grandchildren. Praise God for his blessings.

Hakkesteegt, Henk and Rita (Heideman) of Hillcrest Terrace, 20 Fourth Ave, Apt. 209, Trenton, ON K8B 5N3, celebrated their 50th anniversary on April 30th. Congratulations and much love Dad and Mom from Winnie and Albert Visser (Erin, Alex and Carter, Joel, Nathan and Brent), and Kirby and Arlene Hakkesteegt (Kevin, Lisa and Mack-

enzie, Bryce and Dana, Julie and Angela). We are deeply gratefully to the Lord for the legacy of His grace that you've passed on.

Leep, Wesley and Darlene (Evers) 1754 5th Street, Martin, MI. 49070 will celebrate their 50th Anniversary on June 10. Congratulations and love from your family!

VANDERWAL, Calvin and Ann (VanderWerff), Kentwood, MI celebrating 50 years of marriage on May 20, 2010. Children: Jeff & Candi VanderWal, Bill & Sue Yonker, Dan & Michele VanderWal, Mark & Heidi VanderWal. 13 Grandchildren, 1 Great-Grandchild. We give thanks to God for his faithfulness

Church Positions Available

New Church Seeks Pastor: Living Water Community Church is a new and vibrant congregation in Orange City, IA, eager to share the Living Water with all who thirst. We are searching for a full-time pastor with a vision for outreach and a passion for teaching God's Word. To view our church profile, visit the Christian Reformed website. For inquiries please e-mail or call Scott Groeneweg at 712-548-8131 skgroen@yahoo.com or Al Schuiteman at 712-441-6352 cfs@longlines.com.

First CRC of Edmonton, Alberta is seeking a senior pastor. We are looking for a pastor who is a strong preacher and mentor, with the ability to relate well to the many generations represented in our church while challenging and aiding us as we move forward in the calling God has for our congregation. If you have any questions, or to forward us your resume or profile please contact Melissa at melissa@haarsmafarms.ca.

SENIOR PASTOR-PALOS HEIGHTS CRC (IL) is seeking a spiritually gifted preacher who will lead our congregation to praise and worship heartily, develop more fully as vibrant Christians, encourage our youth, and reach out to embrace those whom God is leading to our fellowship. Having been served for a year by a Specialized Interim Pastor we are now actively searching. If you wish to explore God's call with us, contact Bill Davids, Search Team at bill.davids@clarence.davids.com. Visit our website at paloschurch.org for more info.

Senior Pastor Northern NJ: America's Best kept Secret? Are you adventurous enough to consider a new location for your life and ministry? Contrary to popular stereotypes, Northern NJ is a beautiful area conveniently proximate to nature, New York City and everything in between. A mid-size congregation situated on a 10 acre suburban campus, Covenant CRC is seeking an intelligent and energetic Senior Pastor with strong preaching skills, leadership ability, and passion for engaging the lives of those within our walls and in our community. The Lord has blessed our church with robust youth ministry programs and an active congregation diverse in age and talents but united in the goal of becoming more like Christ. If he puts us on your heart, we would love to hear from you. Please visit our website www.covcrc.org and contact Mark Reitsma at mreitsma@optonline.net or 666 Godwin Ave., Suite 210 Midland Park, NJ 07432. A copy of our Church Profile is filed with the Office of Pastor/Church Relations.

Senior/Lead Pastor Christ Community Church of Plainfield (CRC) is seeking a dynamic pastor who will lead our staff and congregation in solid biblical teaching. Our mission is: "To draw unchurched and previously churched people into a maturing relationship with Christ." We live and worship in the fast growing Chicago suburb of Plainfield, IL. We have 206 families in membership with an average of 500 people attending each week. Our worship style is contemporary with some traditional elements. We are seeking the person God has chosen to lead our congregation. For more information please visit: <http://www.aplacetoconnect.com/pastor>

Senior Pastor The town of Grimsby is a rapidly growing community located on the southern shores of Lake Ontario in the heart of Niagara. Mountainview Christian Reformed Church of Grimsby, ON is seeking a full-time ordained Pastor. We need a caring and visionary leader with a commitment to our vision of Reaching Up, Reaching In and Reaching Out. The Pastor God has selected for us will be able to dynamically preach and teach the word of God, embrace the members of the congregation, welcome visitors and provide strategic leadership to the congregation, to the Council and to the Pastoral Staff. We are

an 800+ multi-generational congregation led by a staff ministry team which presently includes a Youth Pastor and the newly filled position of Pastor of Congregational Care. Inquiries can be sent to: Search Committee, Mountainview CRC, 290 Main Street East, Grimsby, ON L3M 1P8 or email searchcommittee@mountainviewcrc.org. Further information can be obtained by visiting our website at www.mountainviewcrc.org or by contacting Harry DeVries, chair of Search Committee, at 905-945-1872 (evenings 7pm - 10pm EST).

Scottsdale AZ Ministry Will you join us in God's mission to our community? We are committed to providing the life giving water of Jesus Christ to the people of South Scottsdale. God is leading us to search for a mission minded person or family to live rent free and engage our neighbors with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Interested? Contact us at Palm Lane CRC 480.947.3211 or palmLANECRC@gmail.com

Worship Director Inglewood Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta is looking for a part-time Worship Director. Visit the Worship Director Job Description Link at www.inglewoodcrc.org for more information.

New Campus Ministry Classis BCSE in cooperation with The Well CRC of Kelowna is seeking to hire a full time campus pastor to establish a new campus ministry at The University of British Columbia's Okanagan Campus. Since UBCO is a new campus we have a unique opportunity to create a ministry for students and develop a constructive and mutually beneficial relationship with the school's administrative leaders as they seek to help students fill their spiritual needs. Contact ron@thewellkelowna.com or 250-765-1774.

Trinity CRC, located in the western suburbs of historic Philadelphia, is seeking a senior pastor for its small but energetic and diverse congregation. Trinity is known for its high level of unity and commitment to Christ and for its appreciation of strong preaching and blended worship. If you sense the exciting potential of ministry to this effective, intergenerational church, contact the search committee chair, Dwight Jaggard (djjaggard@gmail.com/610-353-4104) or send a resume to 829 Malin Road, Newtown Square, PA 19073.

Peterborough, Ontario Living Hope CRC, situated on the doorstep of the beautiful Kawarthas cottage region, is seeking a full time senior pastor. Our church of approximately 350 members, is an active congregation that seeks to prayerfully live out its mission. We exist to invite the people of Peterborough to experience Christian community (Belong), explore faith in Jesus Christ (Believe), and express Jesus' love to others (Bless). We strive to accomplish this through lively and contemporary Sunday worship services, life groups, and a wide variety of church ministries and discipleship classes. We are seeking a full-time, experienced senior pastor whose strengths are preaching dynamic and relevant messages, leading inspiring and meaningful worship services, providing compassionate pastoral care, as well as being a strong leader and support to our existing staff and ministries. Our current full time staff consists of a ministry coordinator, a youth pastor, and a congregational life director. If you are a CRC-ordained senior pastor with a desire to lead and guide a vibrant congregation in a beautiful central Ontario setting, please contact our S. C. Chair, Pete Oussoren at ouss@hotmail.com for more information, church profile, and job description.

Bridgewood Church of Savage, MN is seeking a full time pastor. We are looking to grow through outreach and community missions. Our new pastor will have a commitment to sound Biblical teaching and passionate preaching that is relevant to both established believers and 'seekers'. Bridgewood Church - People changed by the love of Christ creating a ripple effect in our community. - Check us out at www.Bridgewood.org!

YOUTH PASTOR, full time - Highland, IN. First CRC and New Life CRC are looking for a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ who is gifted and passionate to encourage young people to do the same. Come lead our joint youth team as we seek to model Christ, teach Biblical truth and serve others, both church and unchurched. For information contact Terry Kuiper - kuiper5@comcast.net

PASTOR TO SENIORS Heritage Fellowship CRC in Brampton, Ontario, is seeking a full time person to join our pastoral team. All our congregation's members live in Holland Christian Homes, a senior's complex of some 1,100 residents. Good conversational Dutch required. For more information contact hfcchurch@hch.ca with "pastoral search" in subject line, or call 905.796.7424.

Palos Heights CRC is looking for a part time Worship Coordinator. This person will work with the pastors, praise teams, and other music ministries to lead our congregation in blended, multi-generational worship. Music expertise is required, and the ability to assist with visual technology would be a plus. We also have needs in the areas of Youth Ministry and Bookkeeping. A Worship Coordinator who is able to accept enough responsibility in an additional department will be offered a full time position with benefits. Please contact Pastor Bryce Mensink at bmensink@paloschurch.org or (708) 448-0186 for a position description and other information.

Sr. Pastor of Worship & Admin. Peace Ref. Church - Middleville, MI. Is an active congregation of 300+ members, diverse in age and talents united in the goal of becoming more like Christ. We feature strong programs with theater for children & dynamic youth ministry that reaches out to the community along with a well attended Sunday Education Program for ages 3 through adult. Desire an energetic, RCA ordained or compatible, Pastor who preaches literal truth of the Bible, who has a passion for evangelism, community outreach, and spiritual growth. A leader with a history of church growth and effective staff management of comparable or larger sized church preferred. Send Resumes & questions to Sandy Donker, S. T. Chair @ sandy.donker@yahoo.com

Youth Ministry Coordinator First Christian Reformed Church, located in Canada's first capital, Kingston, Ontario, is seeking a Full-Time Youth Ministry Coordinator. The Coordinator will work with the youth in First CRC, developing and coordinating the youth and young adult programs and activities plus providing leadership, direction and motivation to volunteer leaders. As well as working with the youth, we are also looking for the Coordinator to spend time using their other gifts contributing to one of these areas: Worship, Outreach, or Small Group Ministry. A complete job description and information about First CRC and the City of Kingston can be found on our website www.1stcrckingston.on.ca. To inquire or apply contact Alicia at info@1stcrckingston.on.ca, fax to 613-542-7811 or mail your cover letter and resume to 310 Kingscourt Ave Kingston, ON K7K 4R3. Applications must be submitted by May 10, 2010.

Workman, John & Thelma (Bulthuis) 18000 Pelican, Tinley Park, IL, 60477 will celebrate 50 years of marriage on May 20. Children: Bob & Beth Workman, Randy & Sandi Bergsma, Steve & Donna Workman, Phil & Barb Leo. 15 grandchildren. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

Obituaries

Bruxvoort, Herman, age 91, February 27, 2010 Newton, IA. Survived by his wife, Kay (Boender); children: Don and Theresa; three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Gesink Dr. Owen John, 79, died on March 13, 2010 in Holland, Michigan. He is survived by his wife, Janet (Dekker); children Dan and Mary Vander Kooy, Dirk Gesink, Jane Essenburg, Chris and Becki Gesink; 8 grandchildren.

HAAN, Marie (Colsmán), Age 91 of Denver CO went home to be with the Lord January 26, 2010. She was preceded in death by her husband, Leonard R. Haan. She is survived by her children: Carolyn (Don) Van Donselaar, Nancy (Gary) Diephouse, John Haan, Cynthia (Ed) Berghuis, Steven (Nancy) Haan, and Stanley (Holly) Haan, 17 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren, brothers William and Marvin (Shirley) Colsmán, sister Bernice Boutwell, and sisters in law Winifred Dykstra, Mabel Haan and Florence Haan.

KIEL, Donna (VanSomeren) Kiel; age 81 of 740 2nd St Milaca, MN 56353 went to her heavenly home on March 2, 2010. She is survived by her husband, Laurence, children: Andy (Carol) VanSomeren, Dotty Rensenbrink, Ron (Lynda) VanSomeren, Don (Lynn) VanSomeren, Larry (Denise) Kiel, Tom (Kris) Kiel, Tim (Jeanne) Kiel, Linda Kiel, 21 Grandchildren, 15 Great-Grandchildren, two sisters: Myra VanSomeren and Marilyn (Clarence) Weavers.

Kramer, Lucyanna, age 84, Racine, WI entered in to glory on November 23, 2009. She is survived by her husband, Cornelius, children Ken (Nancy), Karen (Ron), Kathy (Jerre), Kris, Karl (Cindi) Klay (Lara), 20 grandchildren, 9 great grandchildren.



MAATMAN, Dr. Russell (86), of Sioux Center, Iowa died March 22, 2010. Russell held a undergraduate degree from Calvin College and a doctorate from Michigan State University. After marrying Jean Sherrard in 1948, they moved to Indiana where he taught at DePauw University. In 1951, he began as a research chemist for Mobil Oil in New Jersey. In 1958, they moved to Oxford where Russell taught Chemistry at the University of Mississippi. In 1963, the family moved to Sioux Center. Russell taught Chemistry and related courses for 27 years at Dordt College. Russell is survived by his wife of 61 years, one son, John (Anne) Maatman of Sioux Center, two daughters, Susan (Larry) Meyers of Sheldon, Iowa, and Ruth (Roger) Carter of Columbia, MO, fifteen grandchildren, and twelve great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by two daughters, Deb and Becky.

PRANGER, Mae (Berger), age 86, March 1, 2010; Heritage Club DTC 4901 S. Monaco St. #305 Denver, CO 80237. Survived by her husband of 58 years, Harold S. Pranger, 5 children, 1 deceased, 15 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren. She is greatly missed and remembered with love. Memorials to the Denver Christian Schools.

Rozendal, Theodore C., age 69, of Holland, MI, died February 24, 2010. Preceding him in death were his parents, Theodore and Bernice Rozendal; and a son-in-law, Kenneth Schultze. Surviving are his wife, Judith; children, Sandra and Daniel Hahn, Karen and Tom Strikwerda, Lisa and Terry Vandenberg, David and Mary Rozendal, and 9 grandchildren; brothers and sisters, Ed and Bev Rozendal, Nancy and Pete Boer, Bob and Cher Rozendal, and Cindi and David Veenstra; sister-in-law, Betty Baar.

STEVENSON, Mark D., age 24, born January 4, 1986; died March 10, 2010 at home in Pella, IA. Beloved son of David and Ruth; dear brother to Joel.

Tamminga, Miele (Mike), born on June 13th, 1927, Friesland, the Netherlands. Loving husband of Roelie for 58 years, went home to be with his Lord on Thursday, March 25. He is predeceased by one brother, and survived by six siblings. He is loved and will be missed by, Roelie, his 7 children, seventeen grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Van Essen, Arlene Joyce; March 24, 2010; 2281 Ottawa Beach Rd., Holland, MI 49424; She is survived by her husband of 58 years, Dr. Willard Van Essen; children: Douglas (Sandy) Van Essen, Dr. Robert (Tonja) Van Essen and Lori Vander Baan (Brian), all of Grand Rapids; grandchildren: Kate (Matt) Bylsma, Nicole (Bill) Marks, Amanda and Tanner Van Essen, and Mitchell, Brett and Dylan VanderBaan; great-grandson, William Marks; sister: Katherine; brothers: Cornelius, Robert, and Ronald.

Warners, Gladys (Scholten), age 87, went to be with her Lord on March 1. She was preceded in death by her husband, William. She will be remembered by her children: Ron (Jackie) Warners, Ruth Ringnald, Sharon (Craig) Fredricks; her 7 grandchildren and 1 great-grandson.

Real Estate: Sales and Rental

San Clemente, Ca. 3bd/3ba condo. 1bd/1ba. Ocean View, 200 yd to beach. Near Disney Land, San Diego Zoo www.vrbo.com/196251 (949) 413-6241 Night, Week or Month

For Rent Copper Mountain Colorado condo. 1 bed, 1 den; 2 baths; sleeps 6. SUMMER SPECIAL (May-October) 7 nights \$395.00 + Tax. doand@mho.net

Anna Maria Island, FL Condos pool, beach access, linens, fully equipped. 1 and 2 bedrooms. \$650-750/wk. D. Redeker, 941-778-1915. redekercondos.com

Kissimme home for rent New, 6 bedroom, 4 bath, fully furnished home with private pool, 3 miles from Disney. www.floridavacahome.com. 708-372-2586

Oceanfront condo rentals, 2BR/2BA New Smyrna Beach, FL (Units 403, 501, 503), Daily, Weekly, Monthly rates. Reference Banner ad for 10% discount. 800-874-1931 or OBCRENTALS.COM.

Orlando Condo rentals in Ventura Golf Resort. Fully equipped; close to Disney; sleeps 6. Call 616/318-7248; http://dslobe.home.comcast.net

Maui condo on the Kaanapali Beach. email: agdendulk@cv-access.com www.vrbo.com/94024 (209) 883-2608. Sleeps six.

FOR SALE: Large lot and 34ft. trailer at Saugatuck RV Resort; on Goshorn Lake. Saugatuck MI 49453. Phone: (616) 214-4651. Cell: (904) 228-7217.

Lakefront log cabin Priv. frontage. sandy swim area. Sleeps 6-8. 30 min N of GR. All sport lake. Kayak, fishing boat, swim raft, call for photos \$695. 616-583-0407

Cottage for rent Hess Lake, Newaygo, MI. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths. Sleeps 12. \$1300/week. Call Lonnie at 616-942-0048.

Northern MI Rental- On Burt Lake 4 BR 3 bath, sleeps 12 Boating, fishing, skiing, fall colors, Inland Waterway. Weeks in Aug still available. BLCottage@comcast.net

Holland mi nice 1 bedroom guest house with kitchen and living area, near South Lake Macatawa. \$375wk \$80nt www.hollandplace.com 616-335-8766

GRAND HAVEN COTTAGES -Summer Weekly Cottage Rentals in Lovely Grand Haven, MI Just two Blocks from downtown shopping and restaurants. We have 1-five bedroom cottage, and 1-three bedroom cottage. Please visit our website for pictures/pricing @www.grandhavensummerbreeze.com or www.grandhavencottagecharm.com or call 616-204-8500 for more info and availability.

Cottages on Selkirk Lake, 30 min. south of Grand Rapids, MI. 2-3 bedrooms, 600-700/week. 616-335-5202

Cottage for Rent Lakefront cottage on all-sport lake 1 hour north of Grand Rapids. 5 bedroom, 3 1/2 bath, beds for 17. Swimming, boating (2 kayaks), fishing. \$1800/wk. 269-998-2991

GR Home for Sale Great loc, just E of Calvin. 3BR, Off, 2 Bth. Fam&Rec Rms. Lovely perennial/water/rock garden. grhome4sale@gmail.com

Weekly Rental: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Walk to the beaches of Lake Michigan from this Newly remodeled Vacation Home, 7Br, 4Ba—comfortably sleeps up to 14. Call Ken @ 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info.

Home one block from Calvin For sale 3BR 2 full bath ranch one block from campus. LR, dining area, lg sun room, partially finished basement. Email ritsemark@gmail.com or call 6165819436 for more information.

Lake Michigan Home Holland, private beach over-looking the channel. 5 BR, 3 1/2 BA, 3 sitting areas, sleeps 12. 2 wks left, \$3000/wk. Sept. wks. available @ \$2000/wk. - 269-375-7874.

Lake Michigan - Glen Arbor Three bedroom 2 bath condo for rent. Sleeps 8. Very clean and recently updated. \$2000/week. call 734-426-5072

Gorgeous Lake Michigan views Pool on beach. 2 bd/2ba condo, sleeps 6. Tennis, mini golf, kayaking, shared private beach. Kid's & teen programs. Christian setting. \$1500-\$2300/week. Ann 616-540-6261/ann@annspangler.com

\$400/wk 3 bdrm cottage for rent on Spec Lake 5 mi north of Allegan. 616-896-7105.

COTTAGE NEXT TO HOLLAND STATE PARK. 10 min walk to beach 3BR/1Bath sleeps 7-9 \$1200/wk June 12-Sep 4. \$800/wk off-season. Newly decorated 616-772-7402

LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE Weekly rental in June & August. Million dollar view from large deck. 3 bedrooms, 1 bath. Montague, MI 616-827-9475, or manistee craig@gmail.com

WEEKLY RENTAL: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Newly built Lake Michigan family guest house, 2br, loft w/ 2.5ba - sleeps 8-10. Lake Mi view & private beach. Call Ken @ 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info.

Fishing Camp Unique fishing lodge in NW ON accommodates small and large groups. All cabins private with dock. www.manitouweatherstation.com

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Service of Praise and Thanksgiving at Sunshine Community Church

Sunday, May 16, 5:30 pm
3300 E Beltline NE, Grand Rapids MI
Meditation by Lew VanderMeer
Student participation

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Condo Santa Fe NM MLS #903382 pics Ground level Gated patio Bamboo/tile floors Washer/dryer Heat incl Clubhouse pool sauna weight room. Quiet Centrally located One rsrvd parking space Contact Karren Sahler Sotheby's International Realty 505-501-1385\$150K karren.sahler@sothebyshomes.com

LYNDEN, WA 1 bdrm, sleeps up to 4. \$210/wk, includes utilities. Country-style. 360-220-3342.

Travel



Holiday In Holland in our self-contained cabin or suite. We also offer vehicle rentals and tours, www.chestnutlane.nl

Cruise Join Ken & Pat Vander Kodde on a 14-day Canada / Colonial America Cruise Oct 17-30, 2010. For info see www.kvk-travel.com or call 1 866 974 1964

Family Vacation Rentals Sunset Bluff Resort-Ludington MICHIGAN-Affordable weekly rates June-August, 1-5 Bedroom cottages, 40 acres of grounds, heated outdoor pool, playground, boat/motor rentals, dock space, 1800 FT frontage on upper Hamlin Lake. 1 15 Minutes from Lake Michigan Beaches and Ludington State Park. Call for current availabilities 231-845-5002-www.sunsetbluffresort.com

Tulip Tours: Join us for our "Fall Color" tour to Kentucky/Smoky Mts. (Oct 12-20) or "Christmas in the Ozarks" tour to Branson (November 11-17). Visit us at www.gotuliptours.com or call 269-429-8637 for help in making your plans.

Footsteps of Paul- Faith-based journey in Turkey and Greece. Hosted by Pastor Bob Beasley of the Bible League of Canada. March 19 - April 2, 2011. Call Vellinga's Travel 1-877-352-5150. www.vellingastravel.com

Holland America Line Cruise Show, May 5 at 2pm, featuring Alaska & Europe 2010. Witte Travel & Tours, 3250 28th St. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI. Join us for a lively presentation by one of Holland America's most knowledgeable representatives & Witte's certified cruise consultants. RSVP by May 4 to 616-942-5112, 800 GO WITTE or vacation@wittetravel.com. Attendance not required for show offers.

Oberammergau Passion Play Tours 2010 - contact Witte Travel & Tours for various hosted tours including the Play or for individual tickets. For info visit www.wittetravel.com or email Groups@wittetravel.com. 800-GO WITTE.

Islands of Hawaii Travel Planning Show May 12, 2pm & 6pm, featuring a dynamic overview of the islands by a representative of the Hawaii Visitors Bureau. Witte Travel & Tours, 3250 28th St. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI. Meet Witte's travel consultants who have been there! Tips, planning guides & special offers for groups & individuals. RSVP by May 11 to 616-942-5112, 800 GO WITTE or vacation@wittetravel.com.

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Caring for aging parents? Visiting Angels offers in-home assisted living. Our caregivers will prepare meals, do light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation to appointments, and joyful companionship. Whether you need a few hours a day or live-in care, for assisted independent living in your home anywhere in West Michigan call Trish Borgdorff at 616-243-7080 or toll free at 888-264-3580. TRIP Participant.

A GREAT WAY TO GIVE "You may be able to create a significant donation to your favorite charity without impacting your estate" If you have an investment account with at least \$200,000 and you're between the ages of 45 and 85, call Sustainable Finances at 1-866-561-3754 to speak with a licensed agent.

Grand Rapids area Realtor Calvin Grad ready to work hard for you. Call Diane (Dykstra) Ebberts at Greenridge Realty. 616-974-6706, debbers@greenridge.com

Kuik Computer Services Custom software, training, and problem solving. 616-914-0486

Help! Is there anyone you know who needs help? Go to www.corc.org for a list of Christian care-giving agencies in the Reformed community.



At Calvin Theological Seminary we are deeply invested in the personal and spiritual formation of every student. Rooted in Reformed theology, our program is designed for developing pastors and nurtures the individual growth and development essential to this important calling.

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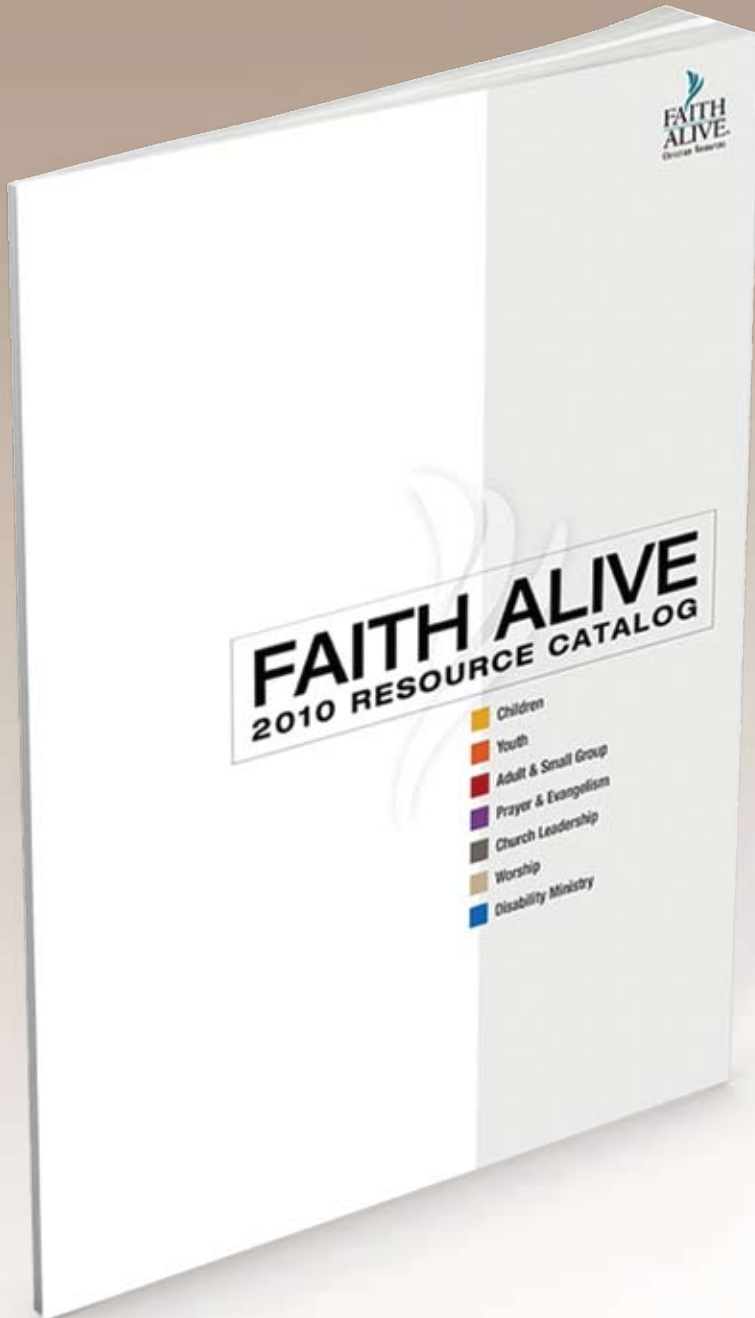


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Punch Lines

Got a photo of something funny related to Reformed history, culture, or tradition? Got a funny story or joke? Please email it to editorial@thebanner.org or send it to 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

What is the dentist's favorite hymn?
 "Crown Him with Many Crowns."
 —Caroline Booy

When a man went to get his eyes checked, the receptionist asked him to describe his difficulty.
 The man responded, "I keep seeing spots in front of my eyes."
 "Have you seen a doctor?" the receptionist questioned.
 The man replied, "No, just spots."
 —George Vander Weit

The spouse of a seminary student was explaining to colleagues that her husband was taking a course on the minor prophets. One listener pondered a moment, then inquired, "Is that a business course?"
 —Pauline Hogewoning

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are hiking. They hike all day long and then, having grown tired, go to sleep in their tent.
 During the night Holmes wakes up Watson and asks, "Watson, do you see the bright stars, and do you notice how clear the sky is? What can you deduce from that?"
 "Well, it clearly tells us that the weather tomorrow will be dry and sunny."
 "No, Watson. It's much simpler than that. It means someone has stolen our tent."
 —John Veltkamp

As a kindergarten teacher at Bellevue (Wash.) Christian School, I'm always trying to make sure the students understand the Bible passages they memorize. We are working on Psalm 121. Assuming they would find great comfort knowing that God is always near, I asked them how it made them feel that God never slumbers nor sleeps. One little girl in the back replied, "Tired."
 —Jean Loven

The recent craze in my class is to be the last in line. Returning from recess, one sobbing child said to me, "But I was first to be last."
 —Jean Loven

Three-and-a-half-year-old Abby had received a wonderful book on the Ten Commandments from the Elmhurst (Ill.) CRC Little Lambs program. While fighting desperately to keep a toy away from her 1-year-old brother Joseph, Abby told her mom, "Remember what Number 10 in my book says? He shouldn't want what other people have!"
 —Carmen Reitsma

Our 4-year-old grandson was being taught the Lord's Prayer by his parents. He prayed, "Our Father, who art in heaven, how do you know my name?"
 —Kathy Wieringa

Send Us Your Photos!

Wick Hubers of Living Hope Community Church in Fox Lake, Wis., sent this photo. He says, "In the fall of 2008, I was in the Philippines teaching for two weeks with Norm Haan, pastor of visitation for First CRC in Waupun. We were driving south of Manila with missionary Dwayne Thielke when he suddenly pulled over so he could point out this sign to us. It did make us smile!"



"MOM! Dad's eating my Science Fair project!"



I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, BECAUSE IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR THE SALVATION OF EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES...
ROMANS 1:16



REACHING
THE WORLD
WITH THE POWER
OF THE GOSPEL

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) is a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. CRWM was formed on June 18, 1888. Today, more than 200 missionaries serve in over 20 countries around the world. For more information, for opportunities to serve, or to order materials, videos and more, go to www.crwm.org or call (USA) 800.346.0075; crwm@crwna.org; (Canada) 800.730.3490; crwm@crwna.ca.